



Essential Histories

# The Falklands War 1982



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# Introduction

In the spring of 1982 the largest task force aerial parity, let alone superiority, could not Britain had assembled for a generation set be achieved. The admiral commanding the sail to recapture the Falkland Islands from task force knew that if the Argentines hit his Argentina. It was one of the most desperate carriers, or any of his large logistic vessels, operations of war ever undertaken. The task the expedition would end in failure, and that force would be operating only 800 miles this would deal a psychological blow to from the Antarctic continent, nearly 8,000 Britain from which she might not recover -miles from its home base, with the onset of at least not for many years. There was a the South Atlantic winter only weeks away. sense that this conflict was not about the The British knew that the Argentine air force invasion of the Falklands per se, but about would outnumber them more than 4 to 1, what that invasion represented. In its long and that its pilots were amongst the most history Britain had often gone to war when daring and skilful in the world. The Royal narrowly defined self-interest indicated that Navy were relying on missile systems that there was no need to do so. 1914 had been had never been tested in war to redress the one such occasion, and 1939 another. So, balance. Many officers felt privately that too, was 1982.

## Chronology

**18-19 March** Argentine scrap-metal workers

**30 March** Royal Marine reinforcements arrive

land at Leith Harbour, South Georgia,

at Port Stanley, bringing the garrison to

and raise the Argentine flag: action

a strength of 76 officers and men.

reported by members of the British

British government decides to send

Antarctic Survey team.

naval units to South Atlantic.

**21 March** HMS *Endurance*, with small Royal

**31 March** *Endurance* lands Royal Marine party

Marine contingent aboard, leaves Port

on South Georgia. British commence

Stanley with instructions to arrange for

preparations for establishment of task

departure of Argentines from South

force for use in South Atlantic.

Georgia.

**2 April** Operation Rosario. Argentine troops

**25 March** Argentine Marines lands at Leith.

invade Falklands. Having inflicted

Argentine naval units begin to leave

casualties on attackers, British forces

home ports. British cabinet discusses

are surrendered by Governor Rex Hunt.

crisis.

British cabinet agrees to order despatch

**26 March** Argentine Junta issues orders for

of task force. In Plymouth first 'Orders'

dispatch of invasion force.

group of commanders takes place.

**29 March** Argentine Junta approves final

**3 April** Argentine Marines land at Grytviken,

plans for invasion of Falklands.

South Georgia, capturing Royal Marine

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defenders after brief firefight. UN

**15 April** Detailed planning for recapture of

Security Council adopts Resolution 502

South Georgia and Falklands

(vote 10-1, four abstentions), which

(Operation Corporate) commences.

demands immediate cessation of



Haig flies to Buenos Aires.

hostilities and withdrawal of all

**17 April** 'War Council' aboard HMS *Hermes*.

Argentine forces from the Falklands,

Elements of the task force depart from

and which calls for a diplomatic

Ascension Island. Argentine navy

solution to the crisis. Margaret

units, among them the carrier

Thatcher announces despatch of task

*Veinticinco de Mayo* and cruiser *General*

force to recapture the islands.

*Belgrano* leave home ports. Haig meets

**5 April** Lord Carrington resigns and is

Junta for talks.

replaced as Foreign Secretary by Francis

**18 April** Further substantial task force

Pym. First elements of the task force

elements depart Ascension.

(among them carriers *Invincible* and

**21 April** Argentine reconnaissance aircraft

*Hermes*) sail from Portsmouth.

penetrates to within 12 miles of task

Requisitioning of merchant vessels

force before retreating. HMS *Antrim*

commences.

uses Wessex helicopter to land special

**6 April** Argentina commences reinforcement

forces on South Georgia.

of forces in Falklands.

**22 April** Special Forces evacuated from South

**7 April** Argentina creates South Atlantic

Georgia due to poor weather

Operational Theatre HQ. Britain

conditions. Galtieri visits Port Stanley

declares maritime exclusion zone

and decides to increase the size and

centred on Falklands and with

speed of the build up.

200 nautical mile radius, to come into

**25 April** British helicopters engage Argentine

effect 0400 hours 12 April. President

submarine *Sante Fe* and drive it ashore

Reagan approves Alexander Haig's

on South Georgia in a damaged

peace mission. *Canberra* arrives at

condition. Royal Marines and Special

Southampton to undergo military

Forces (75 men) land on South Georgia

conversions and to embark 3 Para and

(culmination of Operation Paraquat).

40 and 42 Commandos. French

Argentines surrender.

government withdraws technical

**27 April** Argentine navy deploys to counter

assistance teams from Argentina.

anticipated British landing on

**8 April** *Canberra* sails from Southampton. Haig

Falklands.

arrives in UK. UN Secretary General

**28 April** British government announces

Perez de Cuellar establishes working

further restrictions on transit through

group to develop plans in case of

200 nautical mile exclusion zone

failure of US mediation. Further task

(amounting to complete blockade), to

force elements sail from Gibraltar.

come into effect 1100 hours 30 April.

**9 April** Haig arrives in Buenos Aires

Further task force elements

**10 April** Discussions between Haig and

(requisitioned merchant vessels)

Argentine representatives. First

concentrate at Ascension.

elements of naval task force arrive at

**29 April** Argentine fleet splits into two groups,

Ascension Island.

one moving north-west, and the other

**12 April** Maritime exclusion zone comes into

south of the Falklands.

effect. Haig returns to London for talks.

**30 April** Total exclusion zone comes into

**13 April** Haig travels to Washington for

effect around Falklands. President

debriefing.

Reagan announces support for Britain,

**14 April** HMS *Intrepid* put back into

offering military supplies and

commission. Container ship *Atlantic*

implementing sanctions against

*Conveyor* taken up from trade.

Argentina.

Chronology 9

**1 May** Haig's peace mission fails. Pre-dawn

**12 May** Argentine Air Force launches major air

raid by single Vulcan bomber on Port

effort against naval task force, inflicting

Stanley airfield (Op. Black Buck 1)

slight damage but losing three

followed up by Sea Harrier attacks and

Skyhawks. Decision made to land

bombardments by naval task force;

troops at San Carlos. *QE2* sails from

airfield remains open, Argentines lose

Southampton with 5 Infantry Brigade

four aircraft in abortive attacks on task

aboard.

force. British special forces land on East

**15 May** In raid on Argentine airfield on Pebble

and West Falkland to recce possible

Island, 45 members of SAS destroy

landing sites. RMS *QE2* requisitioned.

ammunition dump and 11 aircraft.

**2 May** Peru offers new peace plan for solving



**19 May** After a temporary lull in operations,

crisis. UN offers similar services.

preparations for landing commence

However, at 1600 hrs HMS *Conqueror*

following official Cabinet approval for

sinks *General Belgrano* approx 35 miles

operation. Sea King helicopter with

south-west of exclusion zone.

SAS personnel aboard crashes.

323 Argentines perish.

**20 May** Sea King helicopter involved in special

**3 May** Argentine patrol vessel *Alferez Sobral*

operation carries out forced landing in

damaged by HMS *Coventry's* Lynx

Chile; crew repatriated. After lengthy

helicopter 90 miles inside exclusion

negotiations UN peace initiative breaks

zone. Admiral Anaya orders Argentine

down. Second Peruvian peace plan

warships back to port.

announced.

**4 May** HMS *Sheffield* hit by air-launched

**21 May** 4,000 troops of 2 Para, 3 Para, 40, 42

Exocet missile south-east of Falklands.

and 45 Royal Marine Commandos (with

20 crew killed, vessel abandoned.

support services) land almost

Operation Black Buck 2 Vulcan raid

unopposed at San Carlos. Heavy air

fails to inflict significant damage on

attacks on naval task force cost

Port Stanley airfield. One Sea Harrier

Argentines 11 aircraft (five Mirage, five

shot down over Goose Green airfield.

Skyhawk, one Pucara), but latter

**5 May** British Cabinet meets to discuss

succeed in sinking *Ardent*. Other vessels

Peruvian initiative. Argentina formally

damaged. British lose one Harrier and

accepts UN mediation.

two helicopters.

**6 May** Britain formally accepts offer of

**22 May** Lull in air attacks allows substantial

UN mediation. Two Sea Harriers lost,

reinforcement of San Carlos bridgehead.

probably to mid-air collision.

**23 May** In renewed air assault Argentines lose

**7 May** Exclusion zone extended to within

at least six more aircraft (as well as four

12 miles of Argentina's coastline. UN

helicopters elsewhere), but hit frigate

Secretary General announces peace

*Antelope*. Attempt to defuse unexploded

initiative. Main body of British

bombs aboard latter fails when one

amphibious forces leaves Ascension.

bomb explodes, and *Antelope* later sinks.

**9 May** Argentine intelligence vessel *Narwhal*

Junta appoints General Garcia to run

(camouflaged as fishing trawler)

new Joint Operations Centre

attacked and boarded by British;

(CEOPECON) at Comodoro

Argentine helicopter shot down over

Rivadavia.

Port Stanley.

**24 May** Further air attacks; several Argentine

**10 May** *Sheffield* sinks under tow. Argentine

aircraft shot down, light damage

transport *Isla de los Estados* sunk by

inflicted on British logistics landing

HMS *Alacrity* between East and West

ships.

Falklands.

**25 May** HMS *Coventry* and container vessel

**11 May** British Nimrods commence operations

*Atlantic Conveyor* sunk, former by bombs

in long-range reconnaissance role.

and latter by air-launched Exocet. Three

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Argentine aircraft destroyed. Air force

**5 June** Scots Guards embark on *Sir Tristram* for

commander Lami Dozo sends peace

transport to Fitzroy-Bluff Cove area.

envoy to New York.

Harrier airbase established at San

**26 May** UN adopts Resolution 505.

Carlos.

Northwood demands that

**6 June** Scots Guards land at Fitzroy,

3 Commando Brigade commence

establishing 5 Brigade forward base.

offensive operations. 2 Para advances

Landings at San Carlos completed.

towards Goose Green.

British have around 8,000 troops on

**27 May** 45 Commando and 3 Para leave

Last Falkland.

bridgehead for Port Stanley. SAS

**7 June** UN Secretary General announces

airlifted forward. Successful Argentine

another peace plan.

air raids on logistics base at Ajax Bay.

**8 June** *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram* attacked by

Vessels carrying 5 Brigade rendezvous

Argentine aircraft at Bluff Cove. *Sir*

near South Georgia.

*Galahad* crippled, 46 killed and

**28 May** 2 Para (600 strong) commences

150 injured (mainly Welsh Guards).

attack on Darwin and Goose Green at

Frigate HMS *Plymouth* damaged by air

0230 hrs. After day-long battle with

attack; several Argentine aircraft



more numerous Argentine forces,

destroyed. Plan of attack on Port

objectives are captured. Approximately

Stanley finalised.

1,300 prisoners are taken. Lieutenant

**11 June** Supported by 105mm guns and a

Colonel 'H' Jones killed.

bombardment by the naval task force,

**29 May** 3 Para reaches Teal Inlet. 45

42 Commando attacks Mt Harriet and

Commando sets off for Douglas.

Goat Ridge; 45 Commando attacks

**30 May** Further Argentine air attacks; two

Two Sisters; 3 Para attacks Mt Longdon

Skyhawks shot down, Major General

(five miles west of Port Stanley). All

Moore arrives in Falklands to command

objectives captured by the following

land forces. 45 Commando and 3 Para

morning.

secure Douglas and Teal respectively on

**12 June** HMS *Glamorgan* damaged by Exocet

north side of East Falklands.

fired from improvised land-based

**31 May** Elements of 42 Commando and SAS

mounting.

airlifted to within 10 miles of Port

**13-14 June** Second phase of attack on Port

Stanley (Mt Kent and Mt Challenger).

Stanley. 2 Para attack Wireless Ridge;

Mountain and Arctic Warfare Cadre

Scots Guards attack Tumbledown;

attack Argentine special forces at Top

1/7 Gurkhas occupy Mt William.

Malo House. 45 Commando reaches

**14 June** After negotiations, Brigadier

Teal Inlet. UN Secretary General

General Mario Menendez surrenders

proposes new peace plan.

all Argentine forces in Last and

**1 June** 5 Brigade commences disembarkation

West Falkland. 11,400 prisoners

at San Carlos. 3 Commando Brigade

are taken and subsequently

forward base established at Teal Inlet.

repatriated.

Aggressive patrolling carried out by 42

**21 June** Port Stanley airfield opened for

and 45 Commandos, and by 3 Para in

operations. *Sir Galahad* towed out to

direction of Port Stanley.

sea and sunk as a war grave.

**2 June** Surrender leaflets dropped on Port

**12 July** Britain announces that active

Stanley. 2 Para elements airlifted to

hostilities over the Falklands are

Bluff Cove.

regarded as having ended; the

**3 June** Versailles Summit opens. President

Argentines fail to make any similar

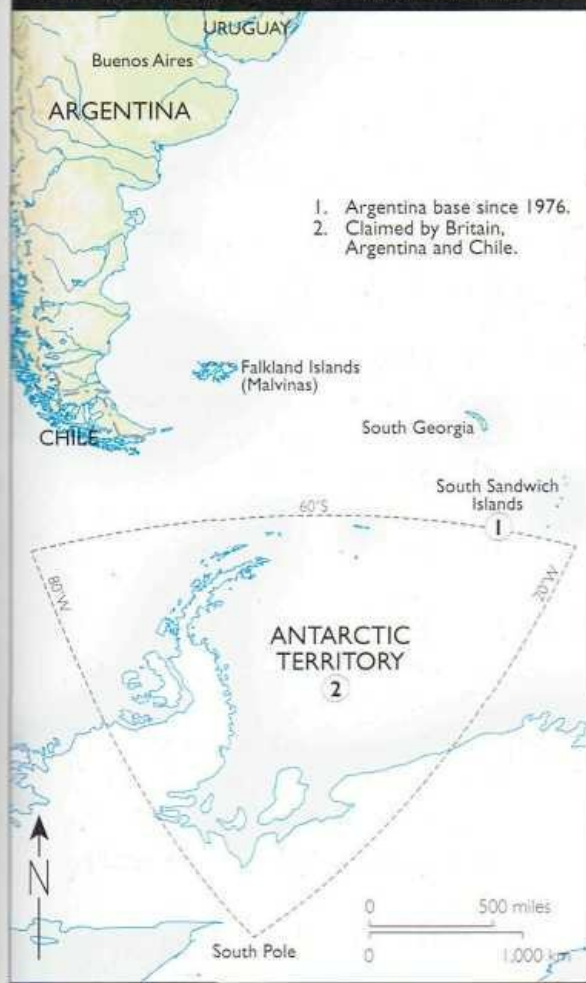
Reagan presents five-point plan to

statement.

British.

**22 July** Total exclusion zone lifted.

# The South Atlantic: Argentina and British territorial claims



Background to war

Tango and tea dance: Argentine

and British misperceptions

In 1807 a British expeditionary force landed

square in Buenos Aires the Plaza Britannica.

on the shores of the river Platte and marched

British investment poured into Argentina,

on the Spanish colony of Buenos Aires. The

first into cattle ranching and then into

British regulars expected an easy fight but

railways, and the younger sons of the British

their opponents, a colonial militia, defended

aristocracy and gentry came down to Buenos

their city street by street. The coherence of

Aires and married into the Argentine elite.

the attack soon broke up, and it was the

They sent their children to Argentine

British who surrendered. This victory so  
versions of English public schools, and many  
stimulated the colonists' self-confidence that  
later studied at Oxford and Cambridge. They  
they soon broke from Spain, fighting a long  
also bred horses that did well in British race  
war of independence in which Britain, their  
meetings, and played polo to a very high  
former enemy, became an ally. In gratitude  
standard. By the early 1980s the Anglo-the new Republic of Argentina named a main

Argentine elite boasted relatives of the  
Princess of Wales and the Duchess of York;  
the Chairman of the Conservative Party, Lord  
Vesty, visited Buenos Aires regularly to  
oversee his vast business investments, and  
many British cavalry officers came out at least  
once a year to try to win back polo trophies.

Relations between Britain and Argentina  
were bedevilled by only one problem. Britain  
and Spain had both claimed the Falkland  
Islands, and along with independence in  
1820 Argentina had inherited the Spanish  
rights. In 1831 the American frigate

*Lemington* had removed the small number of  
Argentine settlers, after they had been in  
dispute with American sealers. Two years  
later the British reasserted their rights and  
established a colony. The population grew  
slowly, peaked at about 2,400 in 1931, and  
then declined slowly to about 2,000 by 1980.

During this century and a half the islanders  
developed a distinctive accent and a  
distinctive, but still very British, culture.

Though remote, they had been touched  
many times by world events - in 1914, for  
example, when several Islanders had lost  
their lives in the Battle of the Falkland

1. Argentine base on South Thule since 1976
2. Territorial claims put forward by Britain. Argentina

and Chile

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Islands, and again in 1939 when HMS *Exeter* political power to prevent an outright put into Stanley for repairs during the hunt handover. This power increased during the for the *Graf Spee*. They had also played a role 1970s with the beginnings of the 'Dirty War' in the last great age of Antarctic exploration, in Argentina and the military coup of 1976, and in the early 1980s old islanders would which placed the country under a succession recall meeting Ernest Shackleton and Roald of military juntas. In 1979, in a renewed Amundsen. Life was hard and simple, not attempt to obviate opposition, the new unlike that enjoyed by the natives of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, a career Outer Hebrides. By 1980 some families had diplomat, devised a lease-back agreement as been on the islands for more than five a possible solution, where Argentina would generations, and were to all intents and be given sovereignty in return for Britain purposes natives of the Falklands. maintaining day-to-day administration Unfortunately Argentina had never during a long lease period. This solution relinquished its claim on the Falkland appeared to be acceptable to the leaders in Islands, reviving it in 1910 and again in Buenos Aires, but when it came before the 1927, when it was extended to include not House of Commons on 2 December 1980, only the islands themselves but was roundly condemned. dependencies administered by the British There was now an impasse. After 14 years governor from the Falklands: the island of

of negotiations Argentine diplomats had South Georgia and the South Sandwich apparently run into a brick wall. And yet Islands. After joining the United Nations other departments in Whitehall began after the Second World War, Argentina activities that suggested that Britain had lobbied patiently to have the Falklands washed its hands of the islands. The Home recognised as a decolonisation issue, in Office decided that the 1981 Nationality Act accordance with United Nations General would not include an exception for Falkland Assembly Resolution 114 of 1945. Years of Islanders, most of whom were now deprived diplomatic manoeuvre paid off in 1965 with of their automatic right to British citizenship. General Assembly Resolution 2065, which Whitehall also announced that the future of called on Britain and Argentina to negotiate the British Antarctic Survey Base at Grytviken 'bearing in mind Resolution 114 and the in South Georgia was under review. The interests [not the wishes] of the islanders'. Ministry of Defence announced the results of Negotiations began in 1966 and dragged a major Defence Review, which on until 1980. Officials at the Foreign Office recommended selling off or scrapping about quickly decided that the 'interests' of the one-third of the Royal Navy's surface fleet, islanders, and Britain's interests in South including the light carriers *Hermes* and America, lay in transferring sovereignty of *Invincible*, and the Landing Ship Dock *Intrepid*. the Falklands to Argentina as quickly as There was also widespread speculation in the possible. To this end they discouraged

press of plans to abolish the Royal Marines.

investment in the islands and signed a

However, the announcement that had the

communications agreement with Argentina,

greatest impact on the Junta was the Mod's

which made the Falklands dependent on

decision to withdraw the Antarctic Protection

Argentina for weekly air flights.

Vessel *Endurance*, and not replace her This

Unfortunately for the Foreign Office, the

ship not only had a sophisticated

Falkland Islands Company (founded in 1851

intelligence-gathering capability, but was also

and now controlled by the British company

a highly visible symbol of Britain's

Coalite), which owned nearly half the

determination to retain its interests in the

islands, and the Falkland Islands Committee,

South Atlantic. When these straws in the

a parliamentary lobby group created by

wind were taken in combination, these was

members of the Falkland Islands Executive

only one conclusion the junta could reach -

Council in Britain in 1968, had sufficient

that Britain had decided to abandon its





## Background to war 13

territories in the South Atlantic, and would  
 amiable soldier, politically naive and  
 shortly lack the capacity to defend them,  
 reputedly extremely fond of the bottle.  
 even if she were to change her mind.  
 Galtieri was dominated intellectually by the  
 All Argentines wanted the return of the  
 naval member of the Junta, the Commander-  
 Malvinas, but it was a *cause célèbre* for the  
 in-Chief of the navy, Admiral Jorge Anaya.  
 Argentine navy. When a junta ousted the  
 Unusually amongst the Argentine elite,  
 government of Isabelita Peron in November  
 Anaya was an Anglophobe, a year spent in  
 1976, the navy was given the green light to  
 London as a naval attache having given him  
 test Britain's resolve. Within a few weeks  
 a profound dislike of Britain and all things  
 Argentine warships attempted to arrest the  
 British. It was rumoured that he had only

British research ship *Shackleton* south of the agreed to support Galtieri's coup on Falklands for sailing in Argentine territorial condition that the general allowed the navy waters. Later that year the navy raised the to push ahead with schemes for removing Argentine flag on South Thule in the South Britain not just from the Falklands, but from Sandwich Islands and established a small her other territories in the South Atlantic. scientific station, which was so remote that The third member of the Junta, a senior air Britain chose to ignore it. Provocative naval force officer, Brigadier General Basilio Lami manoeuvres in November the following year Dozo, was more cautious, but still gave elicited a more robust response, with Britain Anaya guarded support. dispatching a task force of a submarine and two frigates to the South Atlantic. The Junta. Galtieri, Lami Dozo and Anaya pose for a photo On 16 December 1981 a new junta ousted call. Anaya made his support for the takeover on the government of General Viola. It was 16 December 1981 conditional on the agreement of headed by General Leopoldo Galtieri, a large, Lami Dozo and Galtieri to retake the Malvinas. (Gamma)

## The Atlantic area of operations





## Background to war [5

Since early December the naval staff had helicopters) to a detachment of some been planning two operations in the greatest 30 Royal Marines at Port Stanley. In addition, secrecy: Project Alpha, a plan for the it was the middle of the southern winter, clandestine establishment of an Argentine when weather conditions would render presence on South Georgia; and Operation large-scale naval movements and military Azul, a blueprint for a full-scale invasion of operations problematical, in the unlikely the Falklands. As with many highly secret event that Britain chose to respond. preparations, co-ordination between Alpha Meanwhile the first stage of Alpha had and Azul soon broke down. Azul was the gone into operation in December 1981, responsibility of Vice Admiral Juan Jose when the navy landed an Argentine Lombardo, Chief of Naval Operations, and

scrap-metal merchant, Constantino Davidoff, involved the employment of all of and a party of 41 workers at Leith on the Argentina's major warships, including the north-west coast of South Georgia, ostensibly aircraft carrier, and about 3,000 troops from to conduct a preliminary survey of a derelict the Argentine marines and the elite Buzo whaling station with a view to its Tactico, the Argentine special forces. demolition. Davidoff pointedly refused to Lombardo finished the first version of the report to the British base at Grytviken, plan around 15 March 1982. The invasion 30 miles to the east, to have his entry visas was scheduled for the period mid-May to stamped, a breach of procedure that mid-July, the preferred date being 9 July, Argentina's Independence Day. This would *Endurance* at Grytviken on the northern coast of South be after the departure of *Endurance* from the Georgia, October 1981. The Antarctic Protection Vessel South Atlantic, which would very much was not just a visible symbol of Britain's determination to reduce the danger of detection in the final protect her South Atlantic dependencies, she also carried phases, and would reduce the opposition sophisticated intelligence-gathering equipment and was (*Endurance* carried two missile-armed Wasp regarded in Argentina as a 'spy ship'. The British decision to scrap *Endurance* triggered the crisis. (Gamma)





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eventually elicited a protest from London.

On 9 March 1982 Davidoff and his party returned to Leith aboard the Argentine transport *Bahia Buen Suceso*, once more refused to comply with formal entry procedures, and this time raised the Argentine flag.

In Buenos Aires the British ambassador made light of Davidoff's activities. A very different attitude was taken by the governor of the Falklands, Rex Hunt, and his old friend Captain Nick Barker, the commander

of *Endurance*, which had put into Stanley on 19 March. Both men believed the Argentine presence at Leith was a provocation designed to test British resolve, and Hunt managed to convince the Foreign Office to allow him to send *Endurance* back to South Georgia with a party of 22 Royal Marines, who would either defend Grytviken or eject the Argentines from Leith.

Battling against a Force 10 gale, *Endurance* took four days to reach South Georgia, anchoring at Grytviken on the morning of Wednesday 24 March. By then the 'Davidoff Incident' had been widely covered in the British press, and debated in the House of Commons. Broadsheets and tabloids alike revelled in the drama of *Endurance* ploughing through mountainous seas to eject an Argentine landing on South Georgia. More importantly, there was widespread speculation that *Endurance* would not be alone for long, with rumours of the actual and imminent departure of nuclear submarines to back up the activities of the Antarctic Protection Vessel, stories which the British nuclear submarines on or before junior Foreign Office Minister, Henry Luce, 10 April, demanded that Operation Azul go described as 'unhelpful'. Five days later the ahead immediately. Working around the British media carried the story that the clock, Lombardo and his staff produced a nuclear submarine *Superb* had left Gibraltar modified plan codenamed Operation on Thursday 25 March for the South Rosario. On 28 March Task Force 40, the Atlantic. It had not, but on the day the story Falklands invasion force, steamed out of the appeared (Monday 29 March) three nuclear



Argentine naval base of Puerto Belgrano. It submarines had indeed been ordered to the consisted of the ex-American tank landing Falklands. However, it was now too late to ship *Cabo San Antonio*, loaded with deter Argentina.

20 American-built amphibious landing The Junta met on 25 March. Anaya, vehicles, and the transport *Isla de los Estados*. convinced by the storm in the British media Together they had carried some 900 troops, that the South Atlantic would be awash with drawn mainly from the 2nd Marine Infantry



Background to war 17

An Argentine Amtrack rolls through the streets of Stanley early on 2 April 1982. The soldier was posing for the cameras but there is no doubt that his enthusiasm was genuine. (Gamma)

Battalion, based in Puerto Belgrano, and the Argentine submarine *Santa Fe*, ordering it to Buzo Tactico. Gunfire support was provided land reconnaissance troops of the Buzo by the destroyers *Hercules* and *Santisima* Tactico on the beach at Mullett Creek to the *Trinidad*, and the frigates *Drummond* and west of Port Stanley in the early hours of *Granville*. To the north the aircraft carrier 2 April. Governor Hunt was alerted *Veinticinco de Mayo*, escorted by the immediately. In the few hours that remained, remainder of the Argentine navy, provided he and Major Mike Norman, the commander distant cover.

of the Royal Marine detachment, determined Britain's giant electronic listening station, to make sure the Argentines experienced GCHQ Cheltenham, had picked up Argentine something more than token resistance. radio traffic on 26 March which suggested a Thanks to the invasion occurring during a large-scale exercise was under way. Five days relief of the garrison, Norman had 68 later, the evening of Wednesday 31 March, Marines, double the usual number, along with Cheltenham intercepted a message to the 25 members of the Local Defence Force and



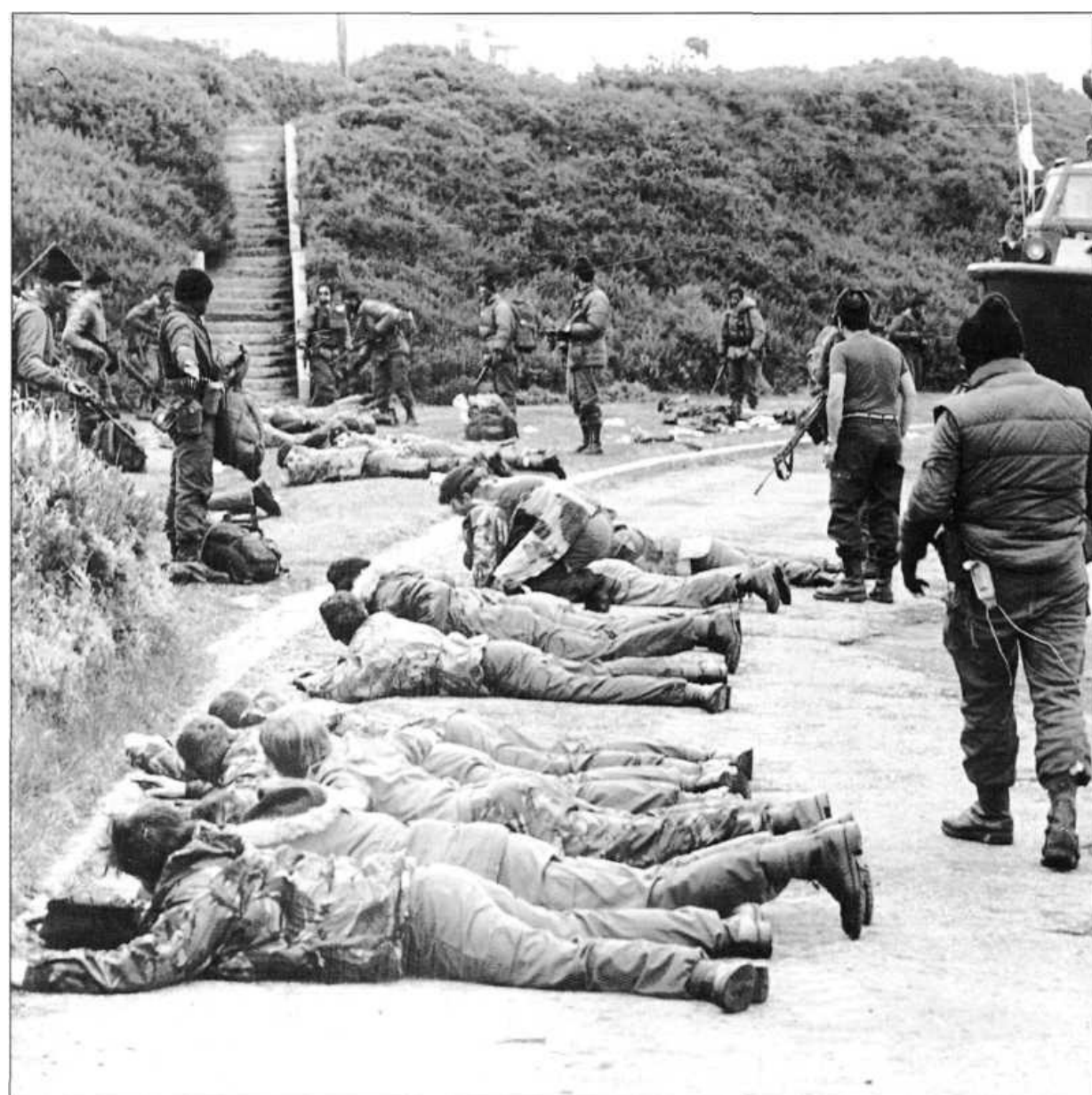


## 18 Essential Histories • The Falklands War 1982

Buenos Aires, Friday 2 April 1982. An immense crowd estimated at more than 200,000 packs the Plaza de Mayo to celebrate the liberation of the Malvinas. The Junta hoped that their adventurous foreign policy would distract the people from problems at home and for a time they succeeded.

(Gamma)





Background to war 19

The picture that made war inevitable. Pointing their attempted to storm Government House, and rifles Argentine special forces make Royal Marine were driven off by the Marines' heavy fire. In prisoners lie on their stomachs. Within a few hours this the meantime, Marine positions to the west image had been radio-photographed all over the world opened up with machine guns and light and helped stir up the public storm which was to break in Britain. (Gamma)

anti-tank weapons on Argentine Amtracks as they came ashore, destroying at least one, 11 sailors from *Endurance* who had remained and damaging several others. Hugely in Stanley when their ship sailed to South

outnumbered, the Marines fell back into Georgia. Norman fortified Government House Stanley or withdrew towards Government on the eastern edge of Stanley as best he House. For the next hour the streets of the could, and positioned the remainder of his town echoed to bouts of firing, which force to cover likely landing beaches. The became increasingly sporadic as the Marines Argentines struck shortly after 0600 on and Local Defence Force ran short of 2 April. A platoon of the Buzo Tactico came ammunition, until the firing stopped at ashore to the north-east and shot up and about 0830. The Argentines now moved destroyed the empty Marine barracks at Amtracks up to Government House, the last Moody Brook, while another group centre of resistance, and surrounded it.



## 20 Essential Histories • The Falklands War 1982

Facing annihilation Governor Hunt

forced to crash land, killing most on board.

surrendered at 0930.

The *Guerrico* now appeared at the narrow

Meanwhile the Argentine frigate *Guerrico*

entrance to the harbour, but retreated hastily

had arrived at Leith on South Georgia, which

to the outer harbour after being hit by bursts

was already occupied by Argentine Marines

and sailors. On the morning of 3 April an

'The Iron Lady'. Taken in mid-April 1982, the picture is a Argentine Puma and two Alouettes study of strain and determination. The Junta had assumed attempted to land troops at Grytviken, but that Britain's first female prime minister would hesitate ran into heavy fire from the Royal Marine before plunging into war, and lived to regret their detachment, the Puma being badly hit and miscalculation. (Gamma)

Background to war 21 of machine gun fire and three anti-tank by the setting, the place where statesmen rockets in quick succession, one of which over the centuries had dealt with so many holed her hull. Safely out of range of the desperate crises, Leach rose to the occasion. Marines' small arms, the *Guerrico* began to He told the Prime Minister that if she did bombard their positions with her 100 mm not send a task force Britain would soon be a gun, while Argentine troops, now very different country, a nation whose word disembarked from the helicopters, moved in counted for very little in the affairs of the on the Marines' flanks. Having done much world. Leach's appeal to simple patriotism more than could reasonably be expected of struck the right chord. Shortly after them, the Marines' 22-year-old commander, midnight on 1/2 April, orders began pouring Lt Keith Mills, ordered his men to cease fire. out of the Ministry of Defence to warships, British territory had been invaded, but it the Royal Marines and to squadrons of the was by no means axiomatic that Britain Royal Air Force.

would respond by sending a task force to the When the news of the Argentine invasion South Atlantic. Initial assessments on the

reached Britain late on Friday 2 April a storm evening of 31 March from the Joint of public indignation and anger broke, much Intelligence Committee, and from a variety of greater than anything Mrs Thatcher had other interested parties, argued that a military anticipated. Britain's national morale was low. operation conducted 8,000 miles from base, There was the long-term problem of the steady in deteriorating weather conditions and decline from great power status. But there were against a numerous and well-equipped also more immediate problems. Only nine enemy was problematical, to say the least. By months earlier the worst urban riots of the 1 April a consensus was emerging that the twentieth century had torn through more response would have to rely on Britain's than 40 British cities and towns, while in diplomacy, though Mrs Thatcher, the prime January unemployment passed the three minister, was deeply concerned that the million mark for the first time since the Great public and parliamentary storm that was Depression of the early 1930s. It now seemed certain to greet the news of the invasion to many that Britain had hit rock bottom. A would damage her government beyond South American dictatorship had invaded repair. She revelled in the title 'The Iron British territory, and now its soldiers, amongst Lady', bestowed on her by Soviet whom were men who were widely believed to commentators, and felt that more was be torturers and murderers, lorded it over expected of her in a time of crisis than might British people. The first pictures of the be expected of a male Prime Minister. Even if



invasion that were radio-photo'd around the her government were to survive, she would world showed Royal Marines being forced to be unlikely to last long as premier or party lie face down in the dirt, and reinforced the leader.

sense of national outrage. Most British people had never felt anything like this anger before,

Unfortunately for the Prime Minister, the

but there were those amongst the very old

key man in such a crisis, the Chief of the

who said that they had - it reminded them

Defence Staff, Admiral Sir Terrence Lewin,

very much of the summer of 1914. On

was hurrying back from a conference in New

Saturday 3 April in an emergency session of

Zealand. In his absence, the First Sea Lord,

the House of Commons Mrs Thatcher and her

Admiral Sir Henry Leach, sought out Mrs

ministers faced a storm of criticism. Her

Thatcher in the House of Commons on the

Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, and two of

evening of 1 April. The admiral contradicted

his junior ministers chose to resign, but Mrs

all the assessments she had received so far.

Thatcher rode it out, announcing that if

He agreed that an attempt to retake the

diplomacy failed Operation Corporate, the

islands would be difficult and dangerous, but

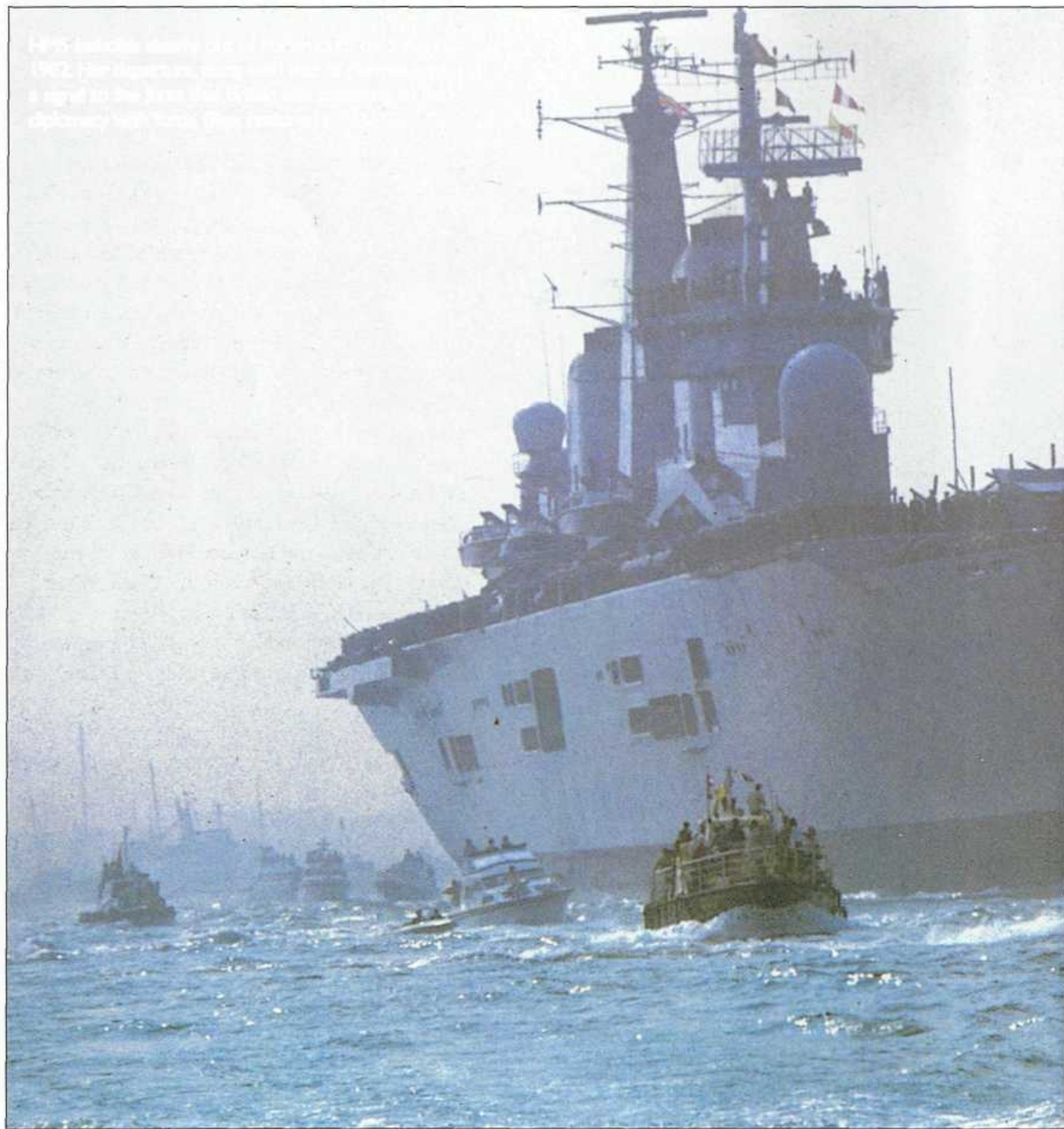
forceful removal of the Argentines, would

thought it was not impossible, and that in

succeed.

any event she had no choice. Perhaps moved

HMS Invincible (R11) is seen in the foreground, with the Argentine ship, the Almirante Brown, in the background. The ships are seen in the South Atlantic Ocean, near the Falkland Islands.



Warring sides

Race to the islands: Argentina

and Britain deploy their forces

Britain's official position in April 1982 was

failed. In fact, it was the exigencies of

that she preferred to resolve the crisis

military operations that set the timetable,

through diplomatic negotiation, and would

not the requirements of the diplomats. This

only employ the task force if peaceful means

is not to say there were not elements within

HMS *Invincible* steams out of Portsmouth on 5 April 1982. Her departure, along with that of *Hermes*, sent a signal to the Junta that Britain was preparing to back diplomacy with force. (Rex Features)



Warring sides 23

Britain who were working desperately for a requirements, and in the end satisfied peaceful outcome. The new Foreign neither. Mrs Thatcher was much more in tune Secretary, Francis Pym, laboured earnestly for with the mood of the British people than was

a compromise, though it was rumoured

Francis Pym and other Conservative grandees.

within some sections of the Conservative

She sensed that they were not much

Party that his real purpose was to inflict

interested in a peaceful compromise and nor

political damage on his arch rival, the Prime

was she. Nothing less than an Argentine

Minister. Al Haig, the US Secretary of State,

departure from the islands with British

an old friend of Pym's, conducted a frenetic

sovereignty fully restored would do, and this

'shuttle diplomacy', which attempted to

was a price she strongly suspected the Junta

address both Argentine and British

could not afford to pay.

A ghost that had haunted a generation of

British Prime Ministers whenever they

considered military action was that of the Suez

Canal debacle of 1956. Determined not to

repeat the mistakes of Anthony Eden, Mrs

Thatcher consulted two previous Prime

Ministers, the Earl of Stockton (Harold

Macmillan) and Lord Callaghan, who told her

to keep political and military activity tightly

co-ordinated. She therefore decided to establish

an inner committee to manage the crisis, which

was quickly dubbed the 'War Cabinet'. Chaired

by the Prime Minister, the War Cabinet

included Francis Pym, Defence Secretary John

Nott, Home Secretary William Whitelaw,

Chancellor of the Exchequer Geoffrey Howe

and Chairman of the Conservative Party Cecil

Parkinson. It had as its professional advisers a

team of key civil servants and service chiefs, led

by the Chief of the Defence Staff Sir Terence

Lewin. The composition of the War Cabinet

meant that the diplomatic and domestic

political ramifications of any military action

could be quickly assessed and appropriate instructions issued. Likewise, British diplomacy could be used to increase the likelihood of a peaceful solution rather than the avoidance of a military solution.

Thus the main thrust of Britain's diplomatic effort was not to effect a compromise but to place Argentina in the wrong, to isolate her, and to keep her isolated. Argentina's Foreign Ministry attempted to respond, but its efforts were feeble and poorly co-ordinated. It was a most unequal competition between a heavyweight diplomatic machine which had been playing power politics on the world stage for more than four centuries, and a foreign ministry



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that could just about manage relations with

With this intense diplomatic activity

a few of its Latin American neighbours.

going on in the background, the first

While Mrs Thatcher was bearing the wrath of

elements of the task force, the carriers

the House of Commons on 3 April, Britain's

*Hermes* and *Invincible*, sailed from

ambassador to the United Nations, Sir

Portsmouth on 5 April. Over the next few

Anthony Parsons, engineered the passage of

weeks British ports saw many departures, Resolution 502 through the Security Council, most spectacularly that of *Canberra* carrying which stressed the illegitimacy of the use of 40 and 45 Commando of the Royal Marines force and called for an immediate and 3rd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment, withdrawal of Argentine forces. On the same all of which attracted immense media day the Foreign Office secured France's interest. The emphasis was on speed, because agreement to halt the export to Argentina of these highly publicised sailings were Exocet missiles, Super Etendard Aircraft and engines for Pucara aircraft, all of which would seriously compromise Argentina's military capability. The impact of this ban was extended on 9 April, when Britain managed to secure an EEC trade embargo on Argentina for one month, with an option to extend the embargo further.

The great diplomatic prize was winning the support of the United States. Argentina had placed her hopes in the close personal relationship that had developed between Galtieri and some of the American military, which included Al Haig, and in the support of Jeane Kirkpatrick, the US ambassador to the United Nations, and a friend of Argentine Foreign Minister Costa Mendez. In fact, there was not the slightest prospect of the United States supporting Argentina against Great Britain. It was not merely that America and Britain shared a history and a culture and subscribed to identical values. With the Cold War entering what proved to be its final and most dangerous phase, a major ally such as Britain would inevitably be regarded as more important than a relatively remote country in



the southern hemisphere. US Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger let it be known that he wanted the military to 'give the Brits every possible assistance, but not, under any circumstances, to be caught doing so'. Weinberger's decision was of the utmost importance. Without American logistic support, most of which was channelled through Ascension Island, the operation would have taken much longer, and would undoubtedly have been compromised by the onset of the southern winter.





designed to send a strong message to Buenos

flew in recalled that Ascension, its barren

Aires and as a result the loading had often

volcanic crags festooned with aerals and

been chaotic. The actual assembly of the task

satellite dishes, reminded them of Tracey

force took place in mid-April, as ships

Island, the secret base of Thunderbirds, a

rendezvoused in the Georgetown Roads off

children's television programme popular in

Ascension Island, a 3,000-foot volcanic cone

the 1960s.

almost exactly halfway between the British

The stop at Ascension was essential, for it

Isles and the Falklands. In 1943 American

enabled the British to organise not just the

engineers had constructed Wideawake

shipping but also a command chain. As this

airfield on a steep lava flow at the foot of the

was an 'out of area' operation dependent on

volcano, and this had since been developed

the Royal Navy the Commander-in-Chief

into a major base. British servicemen who

Fleet, Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, based at

Sea Harriers on Hermes. *Invincible* and *Hermes* together could operate just 20 Harriers, which would

have to face some 120 Argentine machines of equal or superior performance. Fortunately the Harriers

were equipped with Sidewinder AIM-L missiles, which would help redress the balance. (Rex Features)



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Northwood, was designated Task Force Commander, reporting directly to Admiral Lewin, the CDS. The commander of the Royal Marines, Major General Jeremy Moore, was appointed Fieldhouse's land forces deputy. Under Fieldhouse were the operational commanders: Rear Admiral John 'Sandy' Woodward, appointed to command the carriers and surface warships, Commodore Michael Clapp, given command of the amphibious ships, including *Fearless* and *Intrepid*, and Brigadier

Julian Thompson, commanding the Landing

Task Group. A major problem with this

arrangement was the absence of an on-the-spot theatre commander to co-ordinate the

activities of the three operational

commanders with Northwood, but this was

not apparent at the time. Another difficulty

was caused by Fieldhouse's insistence that

the submarines take orders from

Northwood, rather than from Woodward.

The first problem the commanders had to

face was planning the logistics, for they all

knew that the key to Operation Corporate

was the ability of the Royal Navy and the

Royal Air Force to construct and maintain

an 8,000-mile supply line that would be

capable of sustaining military forces in the

South Atlantic. An air bridge from Britain to

Wideawake would have been impossible if

the US Air Force had not handed over

12.5 million gallons of highly refined

aviation fuel. With this, the 54 Hercules

C-130s of 24, 30, 47 and 70 squadrons and

the 13 VC 10s of 10 squadron,

supplemented by three Belfast strategic

The most important shipping movements

freighters and a number of Boeing 707s,

in the early part of the campaign were not

managed 2,500 flights between the

the highly publicised departures of the

beginning of April and the middle of June,

aircraft carriers and the *Canberra*, but the

which delivered some 30,000 tons of freight

sailing of nine Royal Fleet Auxiliary oil

and several thousand personnel. Equally

tankers, soon supplemented by another

important was the work of the helicopters,

14 tankers taken up from trade, for without

which allowed chaotically stowed supplies

these ships the task force would be unable

to be sorted out, cross-decked, and combat  
to proceed. Beginning on 2 April the  
loaded. All this involved 10,600 helicopter  
Defence Operations Movement Staff (DOMS)  
movements. The busiest day was 16 April,  
in the Ministry of Defence contracted and  
when 300 fixed wing and helicopter flights  
requisitioned 68 ships from 33 different  
were recorded, making Wideawake the  
companies, which ranged from the luxury  
world's busiest airport.  
liners like *Canberra* and the *QE2* to North



Sea tug boats. In addition, the Royal Fleet

Men of 2 Para, about to board buses to take them to"

Auxiliary provided 16 cargo transports,

Portsmouth and the North Sea Ferry *Norland*. Once in

bringing the total number of ships

the Falklands the Sterling sub-machine guns the men

carried were quickly abandoned in favour of FN30 rifles

sustaining the task force to 84, about the

captured from the Argentines. (Gamma)

size of a large Second World War convoy.

All these transports were required to keep

the warships of the task force, two aircraft

arrived some days later the carriers would

carriers, five destroyers, 11 frigates and three

employ their 20 Sea Harrier aircraft to attack

nuclear submarines, operating in the South

Port Stanley airfield and other Argentine

Atlantic for just six weeks. The submarines,

bases. Although the Fleet Air Arm pilots

*Conqueror*, *Spartan* and *Splendid*, capable of

were supremely confident of their ability to

25 knots submerged, raced ahead to

engage in successful air combat with

blockade the Falklands, and to seek out and

Argentine Mirage IIICs, trial combats then

destroy Argentine submarines. When they

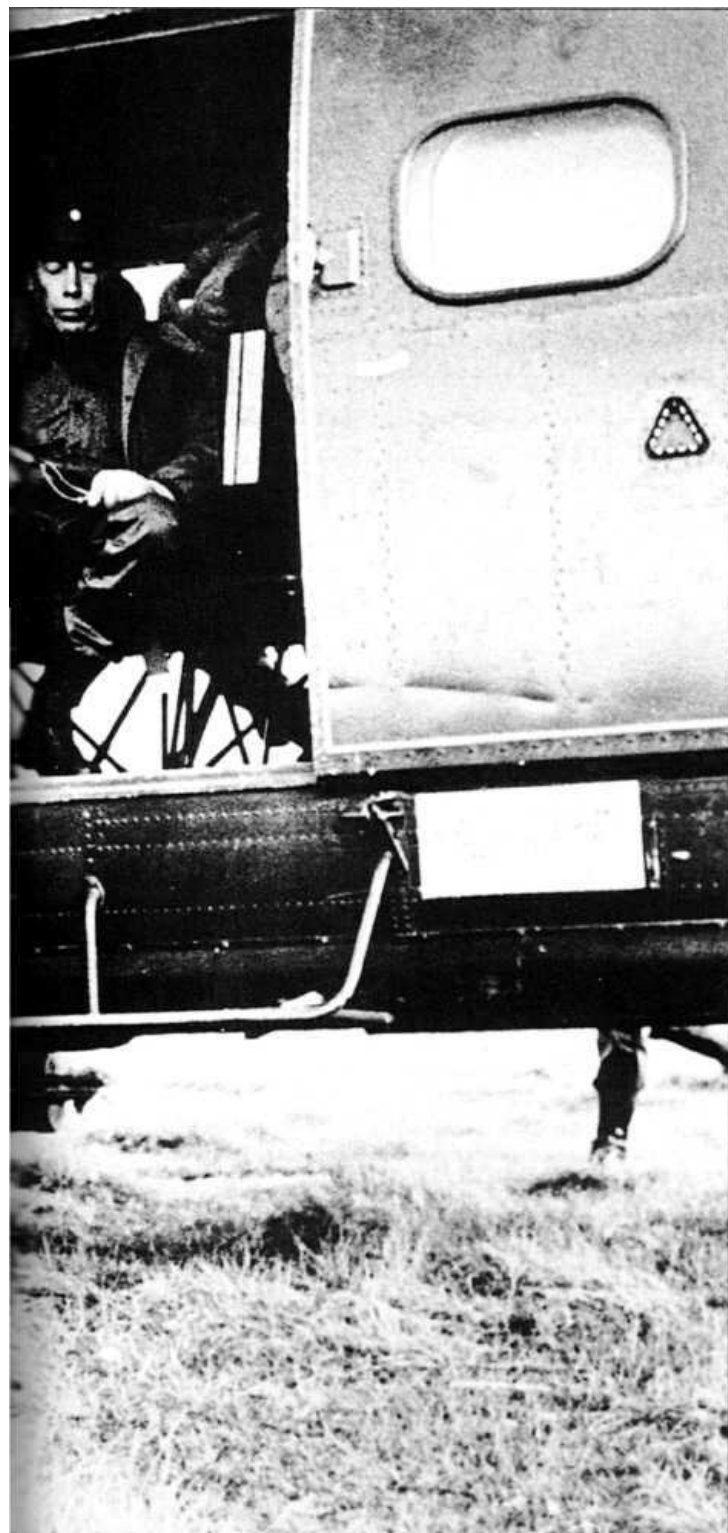
being conducted between RAF Harriers and



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French Mirages suggested that the Mirage was this belief stronger than in the Royal was the superior aircraft. This disparity was Navy, whose destroyers and frigates bristled no longer a cause for concern. Ever since the with Sea Cats, Sea Wolves and Sea Darts. Israeli Air Force had been shot out of the sky Royal Navy ships were also equipped with by Egyptian and Syrian anti-aircraft missile

ship-to-ship Exocet missiles, which would be systems at the beginning of the Yom Kippur more than adequate to deal with a threat War in October 1973, it had been an article from any Argentine warships. It was known of faith that air superiority could be attained that the Argentines were also acquiring by ground- or sea-based missiles. Nowhere Exocets, but it was believed that none were

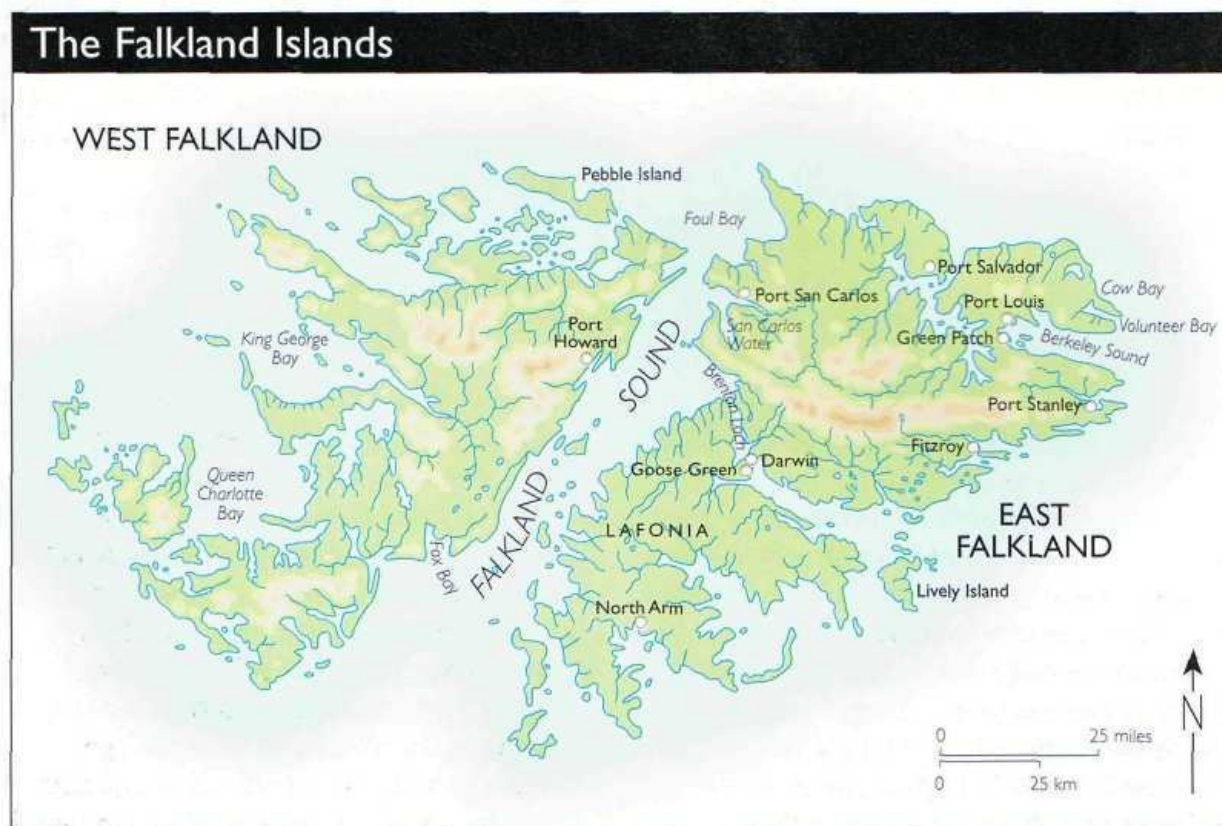


Brigadier General Mario Menendez arrives in the Malvinas. Menendez's role was to be that of governor, but he was soon faced with organising a defence against invasion. He was a competent soldier but the Argentine army was a very imperfect instrument. (Gamma men) of 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines, would spearhead the assault. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the Parachute Regiment, possibly the only troops of the army at that time whose general standard of training and fitness was equal to that of the Marines, were attached to 3 Brigade, along with two troops of light tanks from the Blues and Royals, and Air Defence Regiments from the Royal Artillery. Squadrons of 22 Special Air Service, who would conduct reconnaissance missions and carry out raids, were also aboard the transports. All told, the assault force numbered just 7,000 men, who were amongst the fittest, the best trained and the most highly motivated of any soldiers in the world.

In Argentina the euphoria that had greeted the 'liberation' of the Malvinas, steadily gave way to disbelief and alarm, as the magnitude of British preparations for war became ever more apparent. Brigadier General Mario Menendez had arrived in Stanley on 7 April to assume the role of governor, not of garrison commander, but he soon found himself overseeing a desperate build-up of men and materiel. The navy devoted all five of its transports, and also chartered ships from Argentina's national shipping line. In all nine ships displacing a total of 80,000 tons were loaded, of which eight successfully completed the voyage before British submarines reached the area. Argentina supplemented shipping with an airbridge. Between 2 and 29 April the air



force's nine Hercules C-130 transports  
assisted by a small number of Fokker F28s,  
in operation before France withdrew  
Navy Lockheed Electras and Argentine  
technical support. British warships also had  
National Airlines Boeing 737s and BAC Ills  
guns, and these would be used to bombard  
flew around the clock. A total of  
Argentine positions prior to a landing.  
500 landings were made at Stanley airfield,  
The object of all this air and sea activity  
bringing 10,700 men and 5,500 tons of  
was to put a landing force ashore in the  
supplies, mainly weapons and ammunition.  
Falklands. As this was an amphibious  
Movement by air meant that heavy  
operation it was axiomatic that the three  
equipment or equipment deemed  
Commandos (40, 42 and 45, each of 500



and entrenching tools were removed from  
deployed some 13,000 men to the islands,  
units and sent by the few merchant ships  
which comprised eight infantry and two  
that dared the exclusion zone. On average,  
Marine regiments, an Argentine regiment  
three weeks were to elapse before units were  
being equivalent to a British battalion. The  
married up with their equipment but in  
army had also sent a number of artillery  
many cases equipment did not reach the  
units, which could field 42 105mm and four  
islands at all.

155mm guns and 23 quick-firing anti-aircraft  
The first reinforcements to arrive came  
guns. These were supplemented by a number  
from the 10 Infantry Brigade under Brigadier  
of Roland and Tiger Cat surface-to-air missile  
General Oscar Joffre, reinforced by 3 Infantry  
launchers and heavy machine, gun units,  
Brigade under Brigadier General Omar Parada  
which boasted about 40 12.7mm guns.

on 24 April. Unlike the all-volunteer British  
Argentina decided against deploying heavy  
army, the Argentine army was composed of  
armour, but did send a light reconnaissance  
conscripts. An early problem was the need to  
squadron with 27 armoured cars.

replace the January 1982 intake of 19-year-  
It was easy enough to pour troops and  
old conscripts (the class of 1963) who filled  
equipment into the islands, but less easy to  
Parada's and Joffre's brigades with the  
arrive at a coherent scheme of defence that  
recently discharged 20-year-old 'veterans' of  
made best use of Argentina's air and naval  
the class of 1962. This process resulted in  
forces, as well as her land forces. On 7 April

some disorganisation. The only units that Argentina attempted to create a degree of escaped this were Argentina's Marine inter-service co-operation by establishing the regiments, which, unlike the army, inducted South Atlantic Operational Theatre under one-sixth of the conscripts they required Vice Admiral Lombardo. On the islands there every two months. Thus at any one time there was an unseemly squabble for dominance great majority of a Marine regiment had between Menendez and the senior completed at least its basic training. About a representatives of the navy and the air force,



Rear-Admiral Edgardo Otero and Brigadier

General Luis Castellano. The manoeuvring

came to a formal conclusion on 26 April

when Menendez appointed himself as head

of the Malvinas Joint Command, a

usurpation which won the approval of the

Junta. The conflict now became internecine,

and was complicated by the fact that

Menendez was junior to his two army

brigadier generals, Joffre and Parada, both of

whom tended to treat his orders as

suggestions. By the end of April five brigadier

generals and a rear-admiral had set up their

headquarters in Stanley, each with their own

not inconsiderable staff, comprising, by one

calculation, about 3,000 of the 13,000 men

Argentina had sent to the Falklands. To make

matters worse, any hope of developing a

coherent defence plan collapsed after

19 April when individual members of the

Junta dealt with Menendez directly, each

representing their own service rather than

the armed forces as a whole. Admiral Anaya

visited Menendez on 19 April, Lami Dozo on

20 April, the Chief of Staff General Cristino

Nicholaides on 21 April, and Galtieri on

22 April.

When the shooting started Argentina's

first line of defence would be the Fuerza

Aerea Argentina (FAA) (air force), with some

120 high-performance combat jet aircraft,

more than enough to overwhelm the Royal

Navy's defensive systems. The British feared

that the FAA would extend Stanley's

facilities would be essentially single-shot

4,700-foot airfield with steel matting so that

weapons. If they did not destroy the British

it would be long enough to allow Mirages,

in their first operation the British would

Daggers and Skyhawks to operate from it.

almost certainly destroy them.

Argentina had ample supplies of steel

This decision meant that the FAA's first

matting and enough time to ship it to

line combat aircraft would be forced to

Stanley, but when air force engineers studied

operate from bases in Argentina. Skyhawk

the practicalities they decided it would be

A-4Bs and Mirage III Es were deployed to Rio

too difficult to sustain high-performance jet

Gallegos in the south-east of Patagonia;

aircraft from such a primitive field. Super-

Skyhawk A-4Cs and Daggers were based at

Etendards and Daggers required specialised

San Julian, 180 miles to the north; long-fuel storage facilities, workshops capable of

range Canberra bombers would fly from

maintaining and repairing sophisticated

Trelew another 450 miles further north,

avionics and weapons systems, and

while Daggers were sent to Rio Grande on

hardened bunkers to protect the aircraft

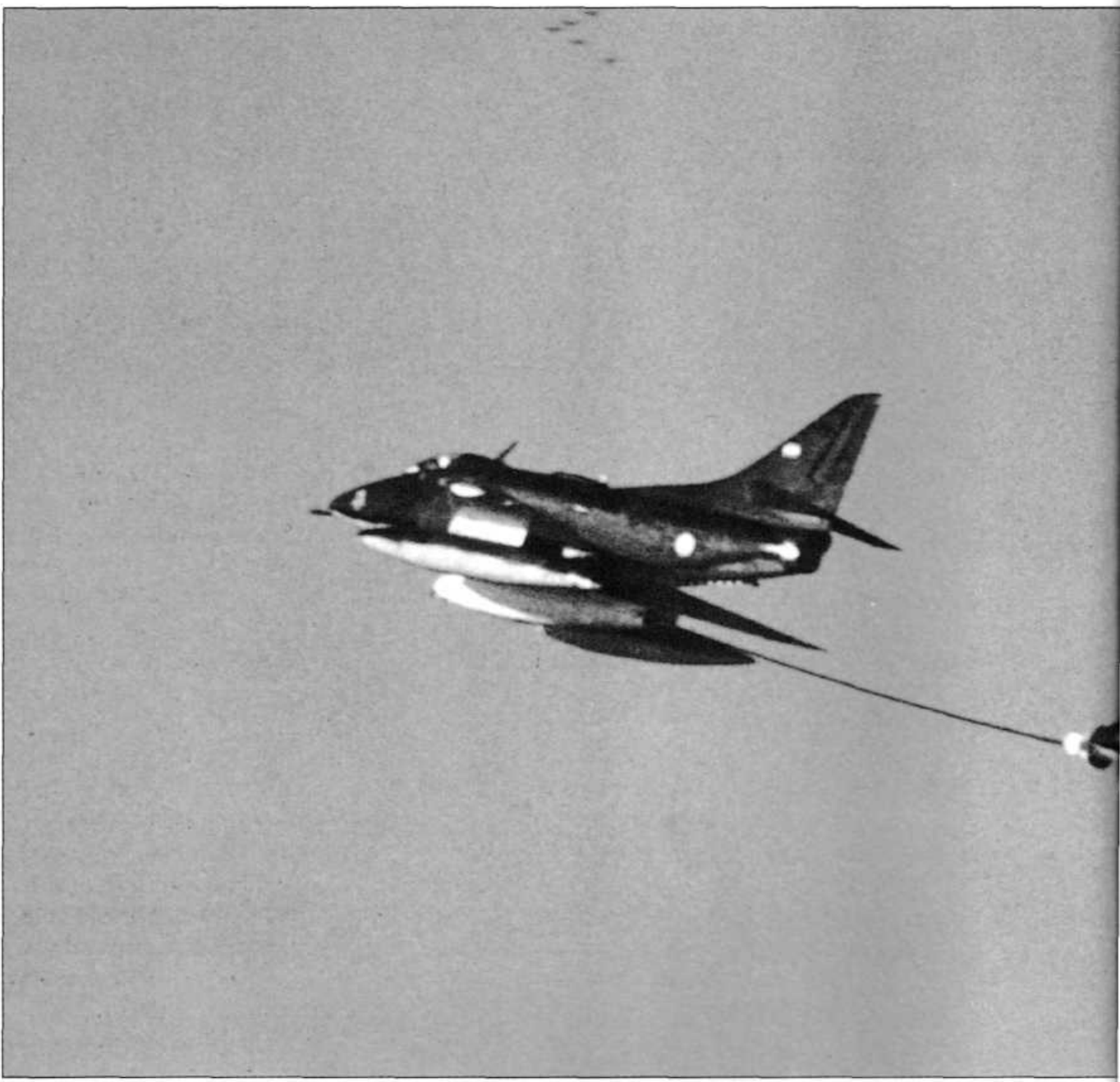
the north-east coast of Tierra del Fuego,

from British attack. High performance

along with the navy's Skyhawk A-4Qs and

aircraft based at Stanley without these

Super Etendards. By the end of April about



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Douglas A-4C Skyhawks. The Skyhawk was the  
Port Stanley. Most of the bases were more  
workhorse of the Argentine air force. Although first in  
than 400 miles from the islands, which  
service in 1957 the Skyhawk's performance was  
severely limited the time aircraft could spend  
comparable to the Harrier Argentina lost 19 of her  
in the area. In-flight refuelling could extend  
60 Skyhawks, and 17 pilots were killed, but Skyhawks  
sank three British warships and two auxiliaries. (Gamma)  
the range, but the FAA had only three tanker  
aircraft, and only the 60 Skyhawks and the  
five Super Etendards had an in-flight

80 machines were in the southern bases,

refuelling capability.

approximately two-thirds of Argentina's first

Thanks to Argentina's counter-line air strength. Air operations were to be

insurgency operations, the FAA was lavishly

controlled from a command set up at

equipped with Pucara IA-58 ground attack

Comodoro Rivadavia air base on the coast of

aircraft, about 30 of which were flown to

central Patagonia, which would rely on

Stanley and to the airfield at the Falkland's

information supplied by a long-range

second settlement, Darwin-Goose Green.

Westinghouse AN/TPS-43 F radar set up in

The navy reinforced the AAF, sending six



Warring sides 33

The Argentine navy, with four submarines  
an aircraft carrier, and a number of Exocet-equipped warships, also had the capability to  
attack the task force while it was well to the  
north of the islands. But like the FAA, the  
naval high command decided that a  
deployment too far forward risked playing  
to British strengths. The Royal Navy, for  
example, was the world leader in anti-submarine warfare, and any attempt by  
Argentina's four boats to attack the Task  
Force as it sailed south of Ascension was  
likely to end in their loss. It was felt the  
same fate would befall any Argentine surface  
units, particularly old ships like the aircraft



carrier and the cruiser *Belgrano*, which ventured in range of the Task Force without the benefit of land-based air support. The navy decided to wait until the British were heavily involved in an air-sea engagement to hit them with simultaneous surface and submarine attacks.

If the FAA and the navy failed to prevent a British landing, it would be up to Menendez's young conscripts to defeat them in a land battle. Menendez had too few troops to prevent a landing at some point on the heavily indented coastline of the islands which were about 4,000 square miles in area, about half the size of Wales. He sent 800 men to Port Howard and another 900 to Fox Bay to establish a presence on West Falkland Island, with a detachment of 120 to Pebble Island, and about 1,200 to Darwin-Goose Green. Menendez knew that Aermacchi MB.339A advanced jet trainers the vital ground was Port Stanley with its converted to a ground attack role to airfield and harbour. If he could hold this Stanley and six Beechcraft T-34 C-I Turbo area long enough the British logistic system Mentor trainers, equipped with a variety would inevitably break down, and they of weapons pods, to operate from a grass would be forced to withdraw from the South runway on Pebble Island, which the Atlantic. He therefore concentrated the bulk Argentines christened Calderon Naval Air of his forces in an all round defence, with Station. The aircraft based in the Falklands, the 25th, 6th and 3rd regiments dug in to while lacking the capacity to attack the task cover the beaches from the airfield to force directly, could supplement the attacks

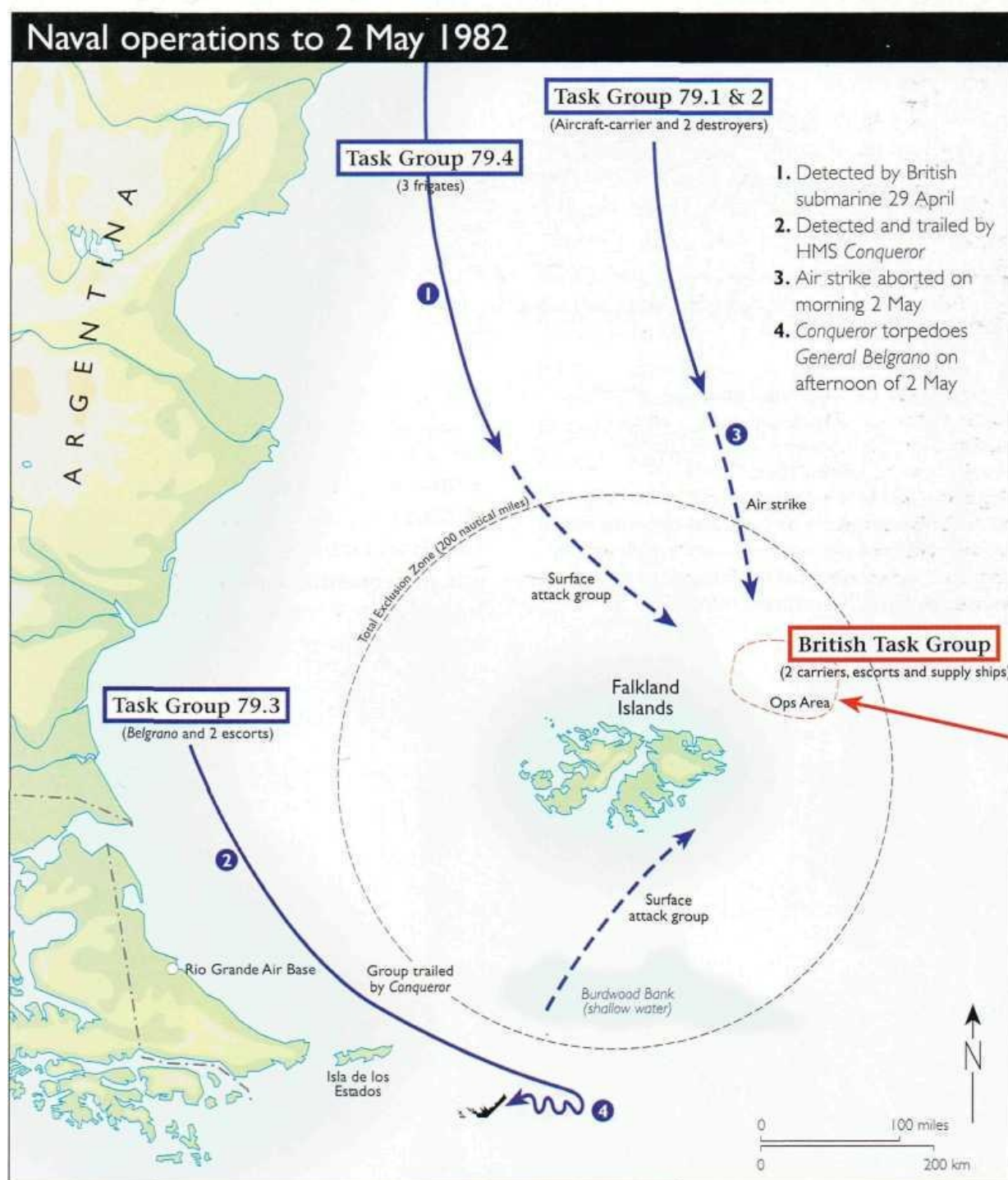
Mullett Creek, while the 5th Marines and of mainland-based jets. In addition, the the 4th and 7th regiments were dug into the Argentine army deployed a number of hills and mountains to the west of Stanley, light transport aircraft to the islands, and Mt Harriet, Two Sisters, Tumbledown, 27 helicopters, including three heavy-lift Mt Longdon and Wireless Ridge. Menendez Chinooks. placed most of his artillery in and around



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Argentine troops dig in on the beach near Mullett Stanley, from where it could support the Creek, south-west of Port Stanley. They were well forces on the beaches or in the mountains, equipped for cold weather with quilted parkas and where it would be protected from bought from the Israeli Defence Force, and British attack by the proximity of the Argentine-manufactured boots very much superior to the DMS boots worn by the British. However many

civilian population. His plan was to fight an  
troops came from the sub-tropical north of Argentina,  
attritional battle from fixed defences, which  
and found the conditions of the Falklands winter  
was subsequently much criticised, but which  
increasingly trying. (Department of War Studies,  
suited admirably the capabilities of the  
Sandhurst)  
soldiers he had at his disposal.



Outbreak

'Gotcha!' The sinking of the

For the first three weeks of April the Junta  
22 April Francis Pym flew to Washington to  
clung to the belief that Britain was engaged in  
consult with Al Haig, and two days later a  
an enormous game of bluff, and that the  
new peace proposal was waiting for Costa  
dispute would be settled by negotiation. On  
Mendez when he arrived in the United States



on 25 April. By then, however, the prospect of comprising the destroyers *Plymouth* and *Antrim* a peaceful settlement was becoming and the tanker *Tidespring*, had pulled away increasingly remote. A week earlier three ships from the main task force and sped to South Georgia. After reconnaissance by submarine British bombs explode near Stanley airport. The focal and long-range aircraft showed no Argentine point of British attention was the runway. First attacked ships in the area, a team from D Squadron by a Vulcan bomber on 1 May. the runway had several 22 SAS landed from *Antrim* on Fortuna Glacier hundred tons of ordnance devoted to it. including a near Leith on 21 April. This operation turned Sea Slug missile. Because British maps were 1.000 m out. into a near disaster when the weather closed not enough high explosive landed on the runway to put it out of action for more than a short time. (Gamma) in, and two helicopters crashed on the glacier



#### Outbreak 37

before a third eventually extracted them. On  
backed by fire from *Antrim* and *Plymouth*. The  
the morning of 25 April the Argentine  
Argentine garrison surrendered shortly before  
submarine *Santa Fe*, sent to reinforce the  
dusk, followed by the surrender of the Leith  
garrison, arrived at Grytviken, where it was  
garrison next day; in total 137 prisoners in a  
attacked and crippled by helicopters from the

virtually bloodless victory. In London crowds  
British ships. Knowing that they had already  
gathered outside 10 Downing Street and sang  
been detected by long-range reconnaissance  
'Rule Britannia', while in New York an  
aircraft, the British decided on a direct assault  
embarrassed and humiliated Costa Mendez  
on Grytviken by a scratch force of 75 Royal  
rejected Haig's peace plan.

Marines, SAS and SBS from helicopters,  
The failure of Haig's diplomatic offensive  
cleared the way for Peru, one of Argentina's  
supporters, to launch its own peace initiative,  
though the main task force was almost within  
striking distance of the Falklands. On 28 April,  
the day Britain announced that a total  
exclusion zone of 200 nautical miles around  
the Falklands would come into effect as of  
1100 30 April, the Argentine navy put to sea.

The following day (29 April) it split into two  
groups, one centred on the carrier moving  
north-west of the islands, and the other on  
*General Belgrano*, moving to the south of the  
Falklands. The British now faced a variety of  
threats coming from different directions -  
Aermaachis, Pucaras and Mentors from the  
Falkland airbases, high-performance jets from  
Argentine bases, two naval task forces, one  
capable of launching long-range air strikes, the  
other Exocets, and at least three submarines.

In the early hours of 1 May the British  
began the systematic reduction of the  
threats. An RAF Vulcan bomber, refuelled in  
flight from Ascension by 15 Victor tankers  
on an 8,000-mile round trip, dropped a stick  
of 21 1,000-pound bombs across Port Stanley  
airfield. Unknown to the RAF, the Argentine  
engineers who had constructed the airfield  
had made a mistake when plotting its



position on survey maps. As a consequence, the airfield's position on maps the crew was using was 1,000 m from its actual position.

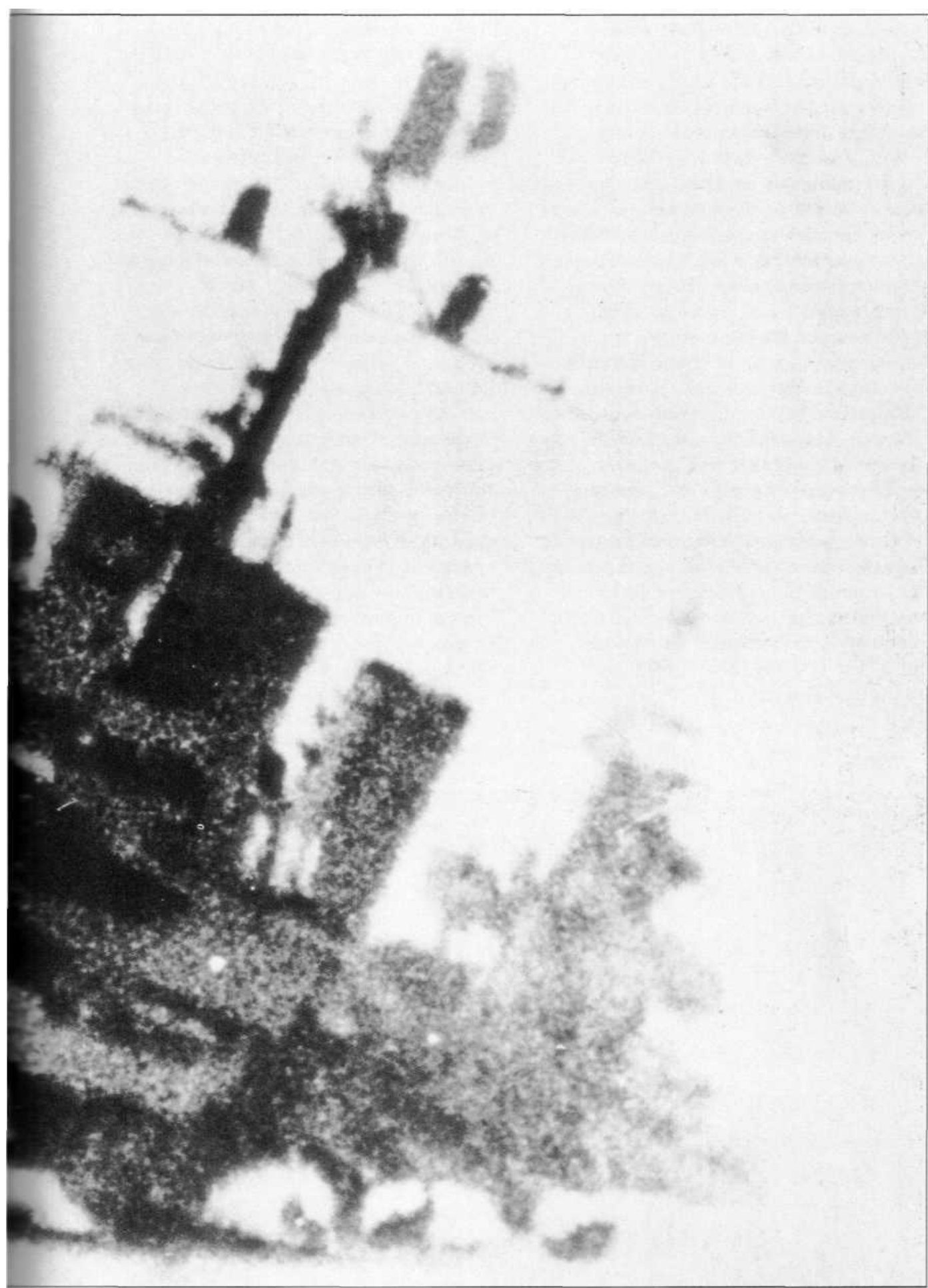
Despite this disadvantage, one bomb hit the centre of the runway, cratering it badly and ensuring it could not be used by fast jets.

As dawn broke, nine Harriers from *Hermes* dived down on Stanley airfield, attacking anti-aircraft positions and dropping cluster bombs amongst parked aircraft.

Simultaneously, another four Harriers hit Darwin-Goose Green, destroying two



on 3 October 1938, she had survived the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, and saw creditable service throughout the Pacific War. The *Belgrano* was an old ship, and that allowed critics of the sinking to depict her as a museum piece, incapable of threatening the task force. In fact *Belgrano* was equipped with Exocets, and a salvo from her 12 6in guns could have sent any British warship to the bottom. (Rex Features)



Outbreak 39

Pucarás on the ground. Soon afterwards

Argentines fuelled and armed their eight

*Glamorgan*, *Alacrity* and *Arrow* steamed

A-4 Skyhawks, but light winds prevented the

within gun range of the airfield and opened

launch of the heavily laden aircraft. The

up, their total of four 4.5s pumping scores of

carrier group withdrew to the north, out of

shells into Argentine depots and positions.

range of British reconnaissance, but still a

Part of Woodward's plan was to provoke

potent threat to Woodward's task force.

the Argentines into a reaction and it was not

South of the Falklands the nuclear

slow in coming. Sporadic encounters during

submarine *Conqueror* had been shadowing

the morning between Argentine and British

the *Belgrano* task force as it zigzagged along

air patrols were the prelude for an all-out

the southern edge of the Burdwood Bank, an

Argentine attack in the afternoon. Several

area of 1,000 square miles where the water

waves of aircraft - more than 40 in all - was too shallow to allow the operation of a

swept down on the British ships, now

nuclear submarine. Already acutely aware of

steaming eastwards at full speed. Rising to

the danger posed by the carrier to the north

meet the attackers, Harriers fired their new

west, Woodward also had to face the

Sidewinder AIM-9L air-to-air missiles and

possibility that after dark the *General Belgrano*

disposed of two Mirages, a Dagger and a

might suddenly steam north over the bank

Canberra. Shortly after dusk the British

until she was within Exocet range of the

bombardment group put about, and by

Task Force. Ignoring the chain of command,

2300 were once again lobbing shells on to

he ordered *Conqueror* to attack the ship, an

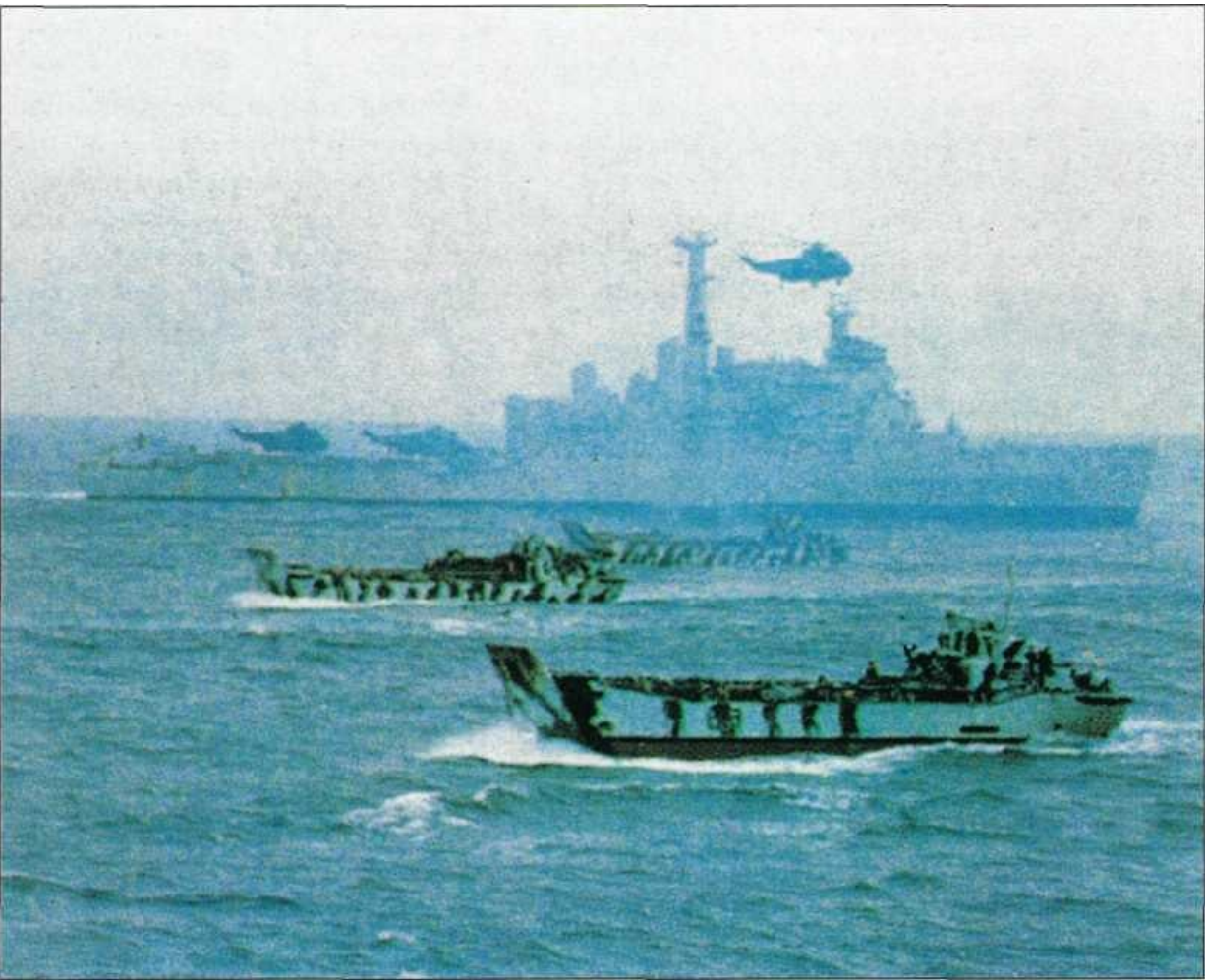
where they thought the Argentines might order which was relayed to and confirmed have their defences. At about the same time by the War Cabinet. Just before 1900, with the Argentine carrier force, cruising to the the range now at 1,400 yards, *Conqueror* fired north-west of the Falklands, detected a spread of three Mark 8 torpedoes, two of elements of the British task force to the which struck the *Belgrano* near her stern. south-east, at a range of about 300 miles. She sank within 45 minutes, with the loss In the pre-dawn gloom of 2 May, the of 368 lives.



The fighting  
From 'Bomb Alley' to Mt  
Harriet  
The news of the sinking of the *Belgrano* had sent the Argentine navy hurrying back reverberated around the world like a shock to port, thus removing two of the threats wave. In the clashes thus far very few had that faced the task force. He now pressed died, and prisoners had been quickly

home his advantage. During the next  
returned via neutral nations to their  
24 hours Lynx helicopters sank and disabled  
homelands. All that now changed. The Junta  
two Argentine patrol boats on their way to  
rejected the peace plan put forward by Peru,  
the islands. An RAF Vulcan, too, paid  
which was much more favourable to  
another visit to Stanley, though thanks to  
Argentina than to Britain, and saved London  
the mapping error mentioned above the  
the embarrassment of rejecting it  
bombs missed the runway entirely. Shortly  
unilaterally. There were to be other peace  
after 0800 on 4 May an Argentine Neptune  
plans, but they were now more likely to fail  
patrol aircraft detected a radar emission from  
than not because too many had died.  
the task force. Less than three hours later  
Argentina claimed the ship had been outside  
two Super Etendard aircraft, scrambled from  
the Total Exclusion Zone and was not posing  
Rio Grande air base in Tierra del Fuego,  
a threat to the task force, an argument that  
loosed two Exocet missiles towards radar  
was soon taken up by some Latin American  
and European nations, and elements of the  
The burnt-out hulk of HMS *Sheffield*. Hit by an Exocet  
British left. Britain did lose some support  
on 2 May, *Sheffield* was soon ablaze. Twenty of her crew  
internationally, but the vast majority of the  
were killed and many more were injured, some with  
British people supported the sinking.  
serious bums. The loss of the *Sheffield* induced task force  
commander Admiral Sandy Woodward to move his ships  
The international implications of the  
to the east, well out of range of aircraft based in  
sinking did not worry Woodward. The event  
Argentina. (Gamma)





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ships only 12 miles distant. Two minutes

LSVs cross-decking before the San Carlos landing.

later one of the missiles smashed into HMS

Despite the fact that weather conditions were

*Sheffield's* starboard side. The warhead failed

worsening, HQ at Northwood insisted that troops on

*Canberra* transfer to landing craft while still at sea. The

to explode, but the momentum of the half-result was that 12 SAS troopers drowned when their

ton missile carried it into the bowels of the

helicopter lost power and plunged into the freezing

ship, where it disintegrated and poured out

Atlantic. (Department of War Studies, Sandhurst)

burning fuel. As fires spread throughout the

ship *Yarmouth* and *Arrow* came alongside,

put about and steamed eastwards until the

paying out fire hoses and playing water on

task force was out of Exocet range, though its

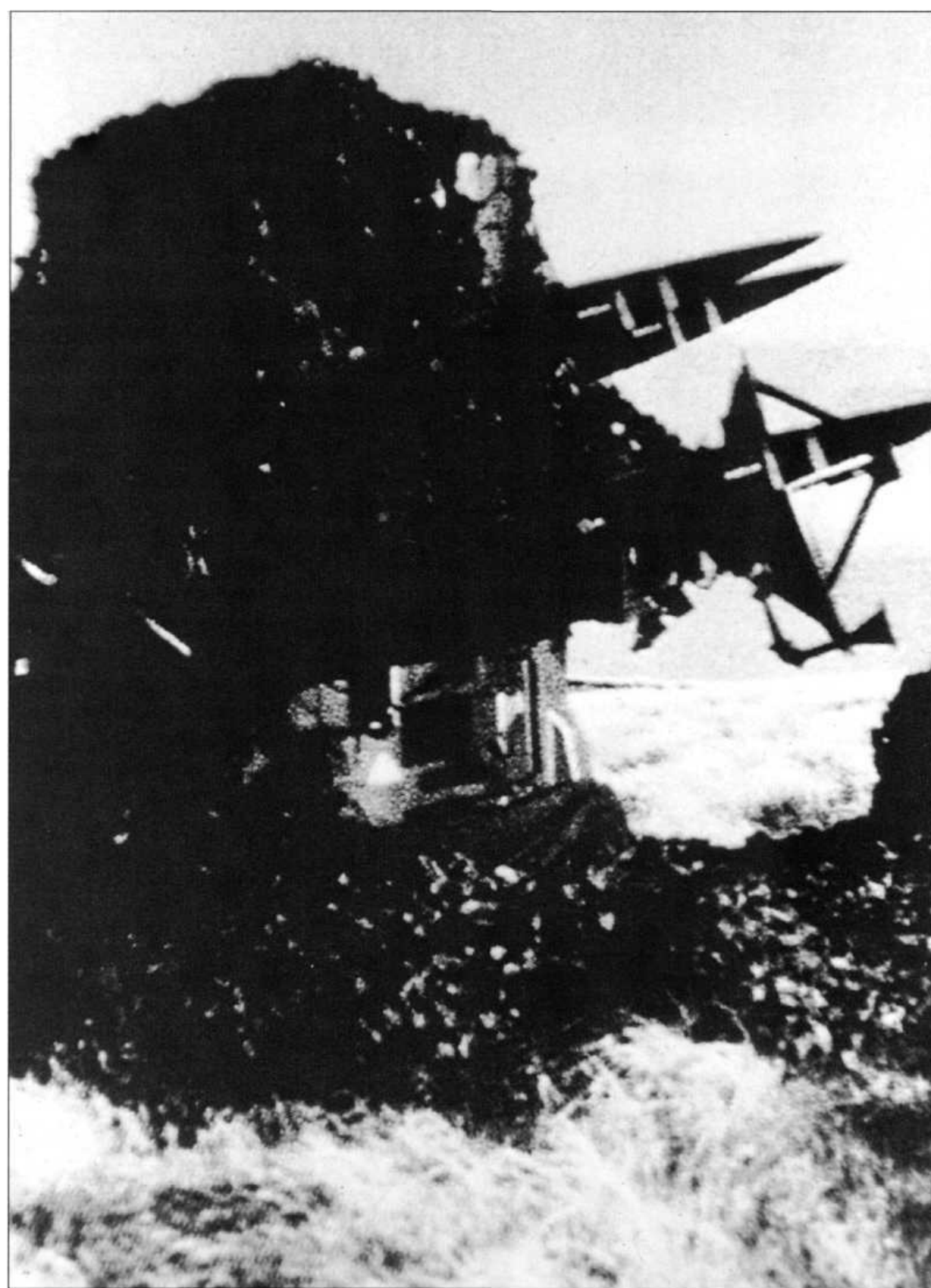
the hull. The battle to save *Sheffield* went on

new position diminished the operational  
throughout the afternoon, but shortly before  
effectiveness of the Harrier. On 6 May he  
1800 her commander, Captain Sam Salt, gave  
warned the amphibious force, still steaming  
the order to abandon ship, and the burned-south, that he would not be able to achieve  
out hulk sank a week later, while under tow  
aerial superiority before a landing. No longer  
by *Yarmouth*. Of her 286 crew, 20 were dead  
willing to expose his carriers to the danger of  
and 24 injured, some with very severe burns.  
Exocet attack, Woodward decided to provoke  
The *Sheffield* was the first warship the  
the Argentines into further attacks by  
Royal Navy had lost to enemy action since  
sending his Type 22s and 42s in pairs close  
1945. In London some of the younger  
to the islands. The '42-22 combo', as it  
members of the War Cabinet expressed  
became known, was a missile trap, in which  
misgivings, though they were soon steadied  
the Type 42's Sea Dart system would engage  
by those who had seen service in the Second  
the Argentines at medium range, while the  
World War. In the South Atlantic Woodward  
Type 22's Sea Wolf would deal with any



The fighting 43 aircraft at close range. The first success came took off again and headed for Chile, where on 9 May when *Coventry*, a Type 42, shot they set the helicopter on fire and handed down two Skyhawks and a Puma helicopter. themselves over to Chilean forces. This Three days later a combination of *Glasgow* a insertion was to have been the prelude for a Type 42, and *Brilliant*, a Type 22, shot down full-scale raid, codenamed Operation another three Skyhawks, while a fourth Mikado, in which the SAS was to have crash-aircraft from a second attack wave was shot landed in two C-130 transports on Rio down by over-anxious Argentine gunners as Grande airfield, destroyed the Super it passed over Darwin-Goose Green. For the Etendards, and then escaped overland to Argentine air force it was not a good day: a Chilean territory. With the Argentines bomb from the second attack wave hit

alerted, many at SAS HQ Hereford thought  
*Glasgow* but passed through her without  
the attack was suicidal and it was cancelled,  
exploding.  
much to the annoyance of the SAS's director,  
The task force was winning the battle of  
Colonel Peter de la Billiere.  
attrition, but it was taking a long time.  
In addition to wearing down the  
Mindful of the success of special force's  
Argentine air force the task force was sinking  
operations against enemy airfields during the  
Second World War, on the night of 15 May  
Sidewinder AIM-L missiles. The Americans had emptied  
the SAS landed on Pebble Island and  
NATO stocks of the latest version of the Sidewinder,  
destroyed six Pucarás, four Mentors and one  
which a pilot could fire head on at an enemy aircraft,  
rather than having to manoeuvre behind it. The  
Skyvan transport aircraft. The following  
Sidewinder AIM-L gave British Harriers a considerable  
night an eight-man SAS team landed in a Sea  
advantage over the Argentine Air Force. Of the  
King outside Rio Grande airbase on Tierra del  
18 Argentine fixed wing aircraft shot down by Harriers.  
Fuego, but detecting an Argentine radar blip,  
17 fell victim to the AIM-L. (Gamma)



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British Aerospace Rapier surface to air missile. The missile can fly at a speed in excess of Mach 2 and has an altitude of 10.000 ft. It is guided to the target either by line-of-sight radio command signals, or in darkness and poor visibility, by a tracker radar Much hope was placed in the Rapier air defence system, but technical and logistic difficulties were to dog it throughout the campaign. The Rapier system succeeded in shooting down only three enemy aircraft. (Department of War Studies, Sandhurst)

The fighting 45

Argentine ships sailing to and around the beach. D Day was set for shortly after islands, testing Argentine defences, and midnight on 20/21 May, when the weather landing SAS and SBS teams to gather forecast promised poor visibility.

intelligence. This up-to-date intelligence,

The first Argentines to encounter the combined with the detailed knowledge of British were a detachment of 20 at Fanning the Falklands' coastline supplied by Ewan Head, an 800 ft bluff which dominated San Southby-Tailyour, a Royal Marine officer who Carlos. Well before dawn they ran into a had sailed his own yacht around the islands patrol of SBS which had been dropped by in 1977, allowed the amphibious

helicopter to the east: nine Argentines were commanders to agree on a landing site, San killed or surrendered, the remainder escaped

Carlos Water, on the west coast of East

in the dark. Another Argentine platoon

Falkland. From the Royal Navy's viewpoint it

ensconced on the high ground behind the

was a sheltered anchorage, surrounded by

San Carlos settlement made the first sighting

hills that gave good cover from air attack,

of the task force. After reporting the landings

and was accessible from both north and

the platoon withdrew hurriedly, shooting

south through Falkland Sound, avoiding the

down two British Gazelle helicopters and

risk of a submarine bottling up the fleet.

killing three of the crew. Pucarás from Goose

Woodward confirmed that Falkland Sound

Green and an Aermacchi from Stanley soon

was not mined by the expedient of sailing

arrived to attack the beachhead but ran into

*Alacrity* through it at night. The beaches intense ground fire, two Pucarás going down were suitable for landing craft, well out of in flames. From the surviving pilots' reports range of any Argentine artillery, and were Menéndez surmised that this was a only lightly defended. Once the beachhead subsidiary operation, designed to draw his was established, its surrounding hills would forces westward and uncover the real make it easy to defend. Its only drawback objective, Port Stanley. In these was its distance of 56 miles from Port circumstances the only major response could Stanley, the main objective, but the come from the Argentine Air Force: thus amphibious group was well supplied with Menéndez requested air strikes from the heavy-lift helicopters, which would allow a mainland.

rapid advance on the capital.

As the amphibious task force sailed into

On 19 May the task force rendezvoused

San Carlos Water the British commanders with the Amphibious Group to the north of were painfully aware of their vulnerability to the Falklands. The War Cabinet, mindful of air attack. Sea Harrier pilots and some of the the impact the loss of *Canberra* with most of escort captains had urged Woodward to

3 Brigade aboard might have on

establish a layered defence consisting of Sea

international opinion, ordered a complex Harrier interception patrols well out to the cross-decking operation from the liner into west of West Falkland, a patrol line of the *Fearless* and *Intrepid*. The sea was high, destroyers and frigates further east (but still



conditions were deteriorating, and a  
to the west of West Falkland), and finally the  
helicopter carrying members of 22 SAS lost  
guns and missiles of the escorts in Falkland  
power and plunged into the ocean, killing  
Sound and San Carlos Water, supplemented  
12 troopers. An avoidable disaster at this  
by Rapiers, which would be set up  
stage made everyone feel depressed but  
immediately the landing had taken place.  
morale remained high, although tinged with  
Woodward was strongly opposed to the idea  
a sense of apprehension. Lest his men lose  
of a layered defence. He believed it would  
their edge, the commander of 3 Para,  
expose the warships patrolling off West  
Lt Colonel Pike, had told them that it might  
Falkland to unnecessary risks, and the Sea  
be like Gallipoli, the disastrous landing on  
Harrier patrols could only be maintained if  
the Dardanelles on 25 April 1915. Others  
the carriers of the task force moved well to  
thought of Dieppe, Tarawa and Omaha  
the west, thus endangering his most





Troops and supplies land at San Carlos. The landing Argentine pilots came in very low. This operation did not go smoothly, and some of the landing allowed the Argentines to achieve an craft grounded on sand bars some distance from the extraordinary degree of accuracy, but it also shore. Fortunately Argentine opposition was slight and meant that at least 10 of their bombs did not quickly overcome. (Department of War Studies, Sandhurst) have time to fuse and failed to detonate on impact. Of the five warships hit, only *Ardent* important warships. Woodward insisted on was sinking. *Brilliant* and *Broadsword* had the adoption of an alternative air defence been damaged by cannon fire, and *Argonaut* plan, the creation of a defensive box of and *Antrim* had been temporarily put out of warships around the amphibious force. A action with unexploded bombs inside them. mixture of missiles and gunfire would shoot Ten Argentine aircraft, five Daggers and five down anything flying into the box. To Skyhawks, had been shot down, all but one minimise confusion, Harriers were forbidden of them by Sea Harriers. to fly into the box themselves or to attack The attrition rate had been high but the Argentine aircraft once they had flown into Argentines had badly mauled the Amphibious it. The hills around San Carlos Water would Group's escorts. Unfortunately for the protect the amphibious group from Exocet Argentines, bad weather over southern attack. Unfortunately they would also make Argentina on 22 May prevented flying until it difficult for the ships' radar to pick up very late in the day, when two ineffectual attacking aircraft before they were literally strikes were made. On 23 and 24 May the

on top of them.

Argentine Air Force was back; a total of

The first Argentine jets screamed down on

33 sorties reached San Carlos and hit another

San Carlos at 1030, and they kept coming

four warships. As on 21 May, the Argentines

until 1530. Of the 45 aircraft dispatched

again came in very low: this time not a single

(26 Skyhawks and 19 Daggers), 26 managed

bomb detonated. On the evening of 22 May,

to carry out attacks on British ships.

however, a bomb lodged in *Antelope* blew up

Argentine pilots, probably conscious of the

while engineers were attempting to defuse it.

political impact of such sinkings,

The intensity of the attacks on 21, 23 and

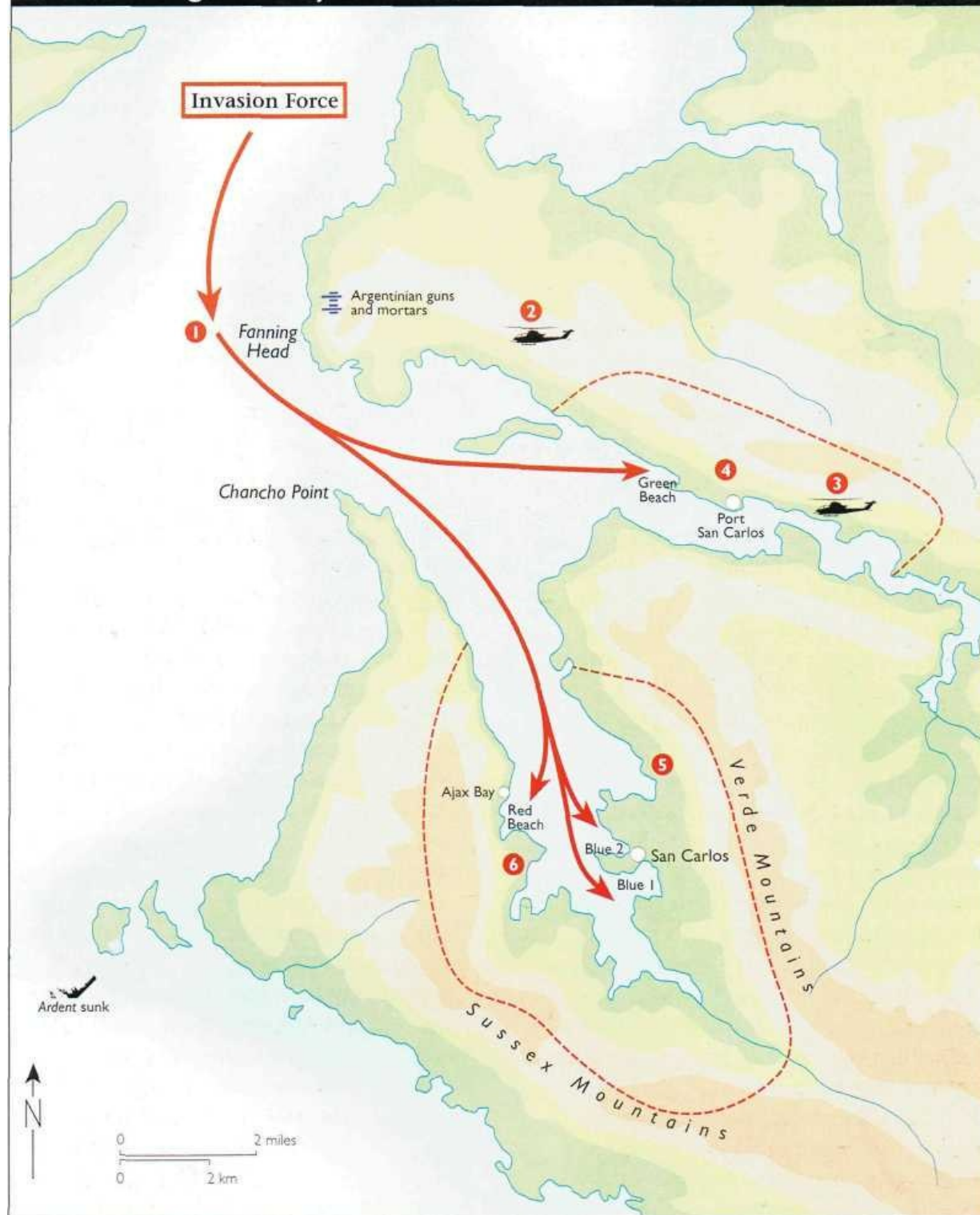
concentrated their attentions on the British

24 May led Woodward to experiment with

warships. In order to avoid British missiles,

forward deployment by sending *Coventry* and

# The Landings 21 May 1982



## The fighting 47

1. Paras and Marines transfer to landing craft

*Broadsword* westward to form an early warning

2. SBS land from helicopter and attack Argentine forces

line off Pebble Island. On 25 May they were

on Fanning Head

soon spotted by Argentine observation posts

3. Argentine platoon retreating from Port San Carlos

who vectored air attacks on to them.

shoots down two Gazelle helicopters

4. Landing of 3 Para and 42 Commando

*Broadsword* was hit by a bomb, which once

5. Landing of 40 Commando and 3 Brigade HQ

again failed to explode, but *Coventry* was less

6. Landing of 1 Para and 45 Commando. 2 Para

fortunate, suffering three direct hits which

subsequently moves up to Sussex Mountains

killed 19 of the crew and sank her. Meanwhile

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in late afternoon two Super Etendards, their

and supplies ashore proved rather more

range increased by refuelling from a KC-130

difficult. Owing to the speed at which the

tanker, picked up a large blip to the north-east

ships of the task force had sailed from Britain

on their radar. Believing they had located

there had been no time to store equipment

*Hermes* the Argentines loosed their Exocets

tactically. The wait at Ascension Island had

and hit *Atlantic Conveyor*, a 28,000-ton

given 3 Commando Brigade's logisticians a

container ship loaded with supplies and three

chance to sort out the confusion, but when

Chinook and six Wessex heavy-lift

the task force sailed south again much still

helicopters. Fires spread throughout the ship,

remained to be done. Thompson and Clapp

detonating cluster bombs, and killing 12 of

decided to keep some of the supplies afloat,

the crew, including her master, Captain Ian

in part to give the logisticians the time and

North. The smoking hulk drifted for several

space to continue sorting, in part because

days before she foundered.

the only place in San Carlos suitable for a

By the evening of 25 May, British

logistic base was a small area around Ajax

commanders were becoming increasingly  
Bay. Here a disused mutton factory could  
worried. In the previous four days Argentine  
provide some cover, but it would rapidly  
air attacks had sunk or damaged eight  
become congested. The first Argentine air  
warships and transports, losses of an  
attacks wrecked the entire plan. As much as  
intensity not experienced since the  
possible had to be disembarked and big ships  
evacuation of Crete in June 1941. But the  
such as *Canberra* and *Norland* had to be  
attacks of 25 May proved to be the high  
returned to the protection of the task force  
water mark of Argentina's air campaign.  
as quickly as possible. Men worked  
Further raids were made against the actual  
frenetically, but when *Canberra* and *Norland*  
beachhead on 27 and 29 May. These caused  
steamed away, they took with them the unit  
casualties and inflicted some degree of  
stores of two commandos and both  
damage, but nothing like the incessant  
parachute battalions, items which ranged  
attacks of 21, 23 and 24 May was seen again.  
from vital replacement battle batteries to first  
Argentina, quite simply, was running out of  
line stocks of ammunition not carried on the  
aircraft and pilots. As early as 23 May  
men, such as mortar, Milan and Wombat  
casualties had caused the withdrawal from  
anti-tank rounds, and a complete resupply of  
action of the highly skilled 3rd Naval Fighter  
small-arms ammunition. Also on board the  
and Attack Squadron. By 29 May some  
*Canberra* were 90,000 rations, enough to feed  
90 sorties had reached the operational area  
the brigade for 18 days.  
of which 21 had been shot down, 12 by

On 23 May Thompson had received orders  
Sea Harriers. By a process of slow attrition  
to proceed with the investment of Port Stanley.  
the British were establishing a degree of air  
To this end, on the following night the SBS  
superiority over the islands.  
landed at Port Salvador on the north coast of  
While the air battle raged, 3 Commando  
East Falkland to reconnoitre the area of Teal  
Brigade was busy establishing a beachhead.  
Inlet, so that it could be used as a forward  
An amphibious operation of this sort,  
logistic base to support operations against  
without a proper rehearsal, enough purpose-  
Stanley. On the same night helicopters took  
built ships or air superiority, violated many  
the reconnaissance elements of D Squadron 22  
of the lessons that had been painfully  
SAS to Mt Kent, from where Stanley was clearly  
learned during the Second World War. But in  
visible to the east. This was a preliminary  
the event the landing went relatively  
move to the establishment of a strong position  
smoothly. A navigational error caused some  
near Stanley by moving troops by helicopter  
delay but the landing craft were guided in by  
across the island. The following evening  
SBS men who had infiltrated San Carlos a  
Thompson's plans lay in ruins, because the loss  
week earlier, and 3,000 men came ashore  
of the *Atlantic Conveyor* removed at one stroke  
with very few accidents. Getting equipment  
virtually all his transport machines.



The fighting 49

Given the critical nature of his situation  
their commander, Lieutenant Colonel 'H'  
Thompson would have preferred to wait for  
Jones, received orders to prepare a raid on  
additional helicopters coming south with  
Darwin-Goose Green to eliminate the Pucara  
5 Infantry Brigade. But the War Cabinet and  
threat. Lack of helicopters ruled out a move  
Northwood were facing mounting political  
by air and navigational difficulties ruled out  
pressure. Ever since the British landing the  
a move by sea. Much to the annoyance of  
Security Council had been debating in open  
the paratroopers, on 24 May Thompson,  
session. On 26 May Ireland tabled a  
who had always regarded the raid as a  
resolution for an immediate cease-fire.  
diversion from the main effort, ordered its  
Although this was watered down to a request  
cancellation.  
that the Secretary General undertake a new  
In London the War Cabinet was not  
peace mission, diplomatically the situation  
ignorant of Thompson's logistic problems,  
seemed to be moving in Argentina's favour.  
but was increasingly concerned to maintain  
Britain might eventually be forced to use her  
the momentum, even if this meant running

veto, leaving her diplomatically isolated and serious risks. Acting on the government's exposed as an opponent of peace. instructions, on 26 May, the day after the

Meanwhile, backbench pressure mounted loss of the *Atlantic Conveyor*, HQ Northwood against the government. Questions were gave Thompson direct and explicit being asked in the Commons about the instructions to undertake two major landing force's apparent lack of progress. The operations simultaneously: he was to send Marines and Paras had come ashore on 21 May, 2 Para to raid Darwin-Goose Green and an British ships were being sunk, but the even more substantial force to invest Port landing force seemed to be content to sit in Stanley. That night 2 Para moved off Sussex the beachhead. Older MPs who had lived Mountain towards Camilla Creek House and through the Second World War reinforced Darwin-Goose Green, while soon after dawn the point by invoking memories of the 45 Commando, followed shortly after by Germans bottling up the beachheads at 3 Para, set off for Douglas and Teal Inlet Anzio and Normandy in 1944.

settlements respectively. All the columns Pressure for immediate action was also were heavily laden, and were expected to building up from within 3 Commando march long distances over difficult terrain in Brigade. The paratroop battalions had come high winds and low temperatures. Their ashore eager and ready for immediate action. logistic support, at least initially, depended Instead they found themselves being ordered on what they could carry supplemented by to dig in on the hillsides. There they waited,



whatever the helicopters could land as soon  
cold and wet, and subject to air attacks. The  
as they became available. Operations of this  
spirits of 2 Para improved on 23 May when  
sort could not have been contemplated, let  
alone undertaken, with troops less well  
trained and less highly motivated than the  
paratroopers and Royal Marines.  
Reaching Camilla Creek before dawn on "  
27 May, Jones sent two reconnaissance  
patrols towards suspected Argentine  
Lieutenant Colonel 'H' Jones. A newcomer to the  
Parachute Regiment, 'H' Jones earned a reputation as a  
fire-eater. In exercises he was almost always declared  
'dead'. His plans for the battle were subsequently  
criticised as too restrictive by those who had walked the  
ground and had years to think about how it should be  
fought. Jones had only a few hours. (Department of War  
Studies. Sandhurst)



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positions. Jones had only been with the  
but Argentine anti-aircraft guns shot the tail  
battalion a short time but he had already  
off one of the aircraft, forcing the pilot to

developed a reputation as an aggressive 'fire-eject. At about this time Jones's HQ tuned

eater'. In exercises he always led from the

into the BBC and received a dreadful shock.

front, so much so that umpires usually

The announcer stated that 'a parachute

declared him 'dead'. On the basis of reports

battalion is poised and ready to assault

from earlier SAS patrols, Jones believed that

Darwin-Goose Green'. The BBC's Robert Fox,

the settlement was defended by at most

who was attached to 2 Para, recalled that

500 Argentines, which would be easy meat

Jones exploded into anger: 'I'll sue John Nott

for his Paras. As the morning wore on,

- I'll sue the MoD -I'll sue Thatcher!' Jones

however, his patrols reported back very

knew that there was now no prospect of

heavy Argentine movements, the first

surprise. There was also little prospect of

intimation that the SAS had been wrong. In

adequate fire support. His second-in-fact, the settlements held 1,500; with added

command, Major Chris Keeble, suggested

reinforcements the number was to rise to

delay, but Jones would have none of it. He

1,630. In addition the settlements were in an

was 42 years old, he was commanding his

ideal defensive position, on a five-mile-long

own battalion, and he knew that this chance

isthmus that was only about 2,000 yards

was unlikely to come again. 'Chris, I've

wide. The Argentine front was covered by a

waited 22 years for this,' he said, 'I'm not

mine field, behind which they had

going to wait any longer.'

positioned in successive defence lines

Jones knew that his only real chance was

11 medium machine-guns, three 105mm

to attack at night, but that this would

guns, and three 35mm anti-aircraft guns.

Shortly before 1130 as the morning mist

Argentine prisoners lie on the ground at the ruins of

cleared, the Argentines spotted one of the

Boca House. The fall of the Boca House position cleared

patrols and opened up with heavy machine

the left flank of the Argentine defences, and allowed B

and D companies to work their way around enemy

guns. A Harrier strike, delayed by the mist,

trenches on the reverse slope of the Darwin Hill

eventually allowed the patrols to withdraw,

position. (Department of War Studies, Sandhurst)

# Battle of Darwin–Goose Green

1. A Coy attacks Burntside House
2. Coronation Point taken without opposition
3. A Coy's frontal assault on Darwin Hill repulsed; Lt Col 'H' Jones killed
4. Moving along beach D Coy takes Argentine positions at Boca House in flank
5. B Coy completes encirclement of Argentine positions
6. After Harrier strike D Coy captures airfield
7. C Coy moves up in reserve

O.P.s on 27 May and fire support base on 28 May

Start lines

Burntside Pool

Darwin

S.A.S. O.P. before battle

The schoolhouse fight

Goose Green

B Coy cuts off settlement

D Coy captures airfield

Main defence lines

Minefield

0 1 mile  
0 1 km



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Argentine surrender at Darwin-Goose Green. The attack the next objective, Darwin Hill, but

British were astonished when long columns of the colonel was worried that a further

Argentines emerged to surrender Prisoners

advance by A Company would unbalance

outnumbered captors by about 3:1. (Department

the attack. In order to get a clearer idea of

of War Studies, Sandhurst)

the situation Jones went forward with his

impose immense problems on command and

protection party, reaching Farrer-Hockley's

control. All commanders fear that fighting in

position just as dawn was breaking. When he

the dark will result in friendly fire casualties,

saw Darwin Hill loom through the morning

the so called 'blue on blue'. Jones determined

gloom, he must have realised that the delay



to overcome this by devising a rigid battle

he had imposed had been a mistake. He

plan with six distinct phases, all of them

immediately ordered a frontal assault up

carefully timetabled. The first two phases

Darwin Hill.

involved securing the start line. The attack

As the Paras moved forward, the

began at 0230 in pouring rain, with

Argentines opened up with everything they

A Company on the left flank advancing

had. Charging up a steep slope, the Para

towards Darwin Hill, and B and D Companies

attack was soon canalised by a gully full of

on the right moving towards Boca House, an

gorse, into which the Argentines poured a

isolated settlement. By 0400 the initial

withering fire. Within seconds the men of

objectives had been reached and A Company

the leading platoon were dead, wounded, or

was now pulling ahead of B and D Companies.

had gone to ground. Realising that he would

A Company commander, Captain Farrar-had to get around the Argentine positions,

Hockley, radioed Jones for permission to

Jones took his protection party and charged

The fighting 53

up a re-entrant to the right of the Hill. He

along the narrow beach, until they could

almost made it. As he single-handedly

attack the Boca House positions in the flank.

stormed an Argentine trench from the rear,

At about 1400 B and D Companies managed

he was cut down by a burst of machine gun

to push south again, taking a few yards at a

fire from behind. The first part of the battle

time. To their left, A Company was

had gone badly and Jones had died

pulverising Argentine positions on Darwin

courageously, trying to put things right. He

Hill with Karl Gustav anti-tank rockets, and was to be awarded a posthumous VC. then attacking the shaken defenders with

The situation was desperate and the Paras grenades and bayonets. Argentine aircraft, responded with the grim - some say sick - Aermacchis and Pucaras, swept down, humour of the British army. An A Company straffing with rockets and cannon. The Paras radio operator, pinned in the gorse gully by fired back with machine guns and Blowpipe an almost solid stream of fire, was calling missiles, downing an Aermacchi. Soon a into his mike 'Kirk to Enterprise, Kirk to Pucara, armed with napalm, was down as Enterprise, for God's sake Scotty, beam me well, crashing near some Paras. The liquid up!' A few yards away a corporal, his leg sprayed from ruptured tanks, drenching severed by a burst of machine gun fire, lay everyone, but mercifully did not ignite. on the ground shouting 'I've lost my leg -

By 1500 B Company had reached the north- I've lost my leg.' In the soon to be immortal western edge of the airfield, where it was reply, a young Para lying just behind him again pinned down by intense direct fire shouted back reassuringly, 'No you haven't from the Argentine's 35 mm anti-aircraft corp - its back here next to me.' About guns. At 1535 two Harriers arrived, dropped 1,000 yards to the west B Company, too, was cluster bombs on the Argentine positions, pinned down by heavy machine guns and B Company, supported on its left flank supplemented by direct fire from anti-aircraft by D Company, pushed to the middle of the guns. Because movement was for the airfield, C Company moving up in reserve.

moment impossible the Paras decided not to

By dusk the Paras were only 400 yards from

waste time, but instead cooked and ate

Goose Green; by now Argentine 105mms

breakfast while shells and bullets screamed a

were firing with their barrels vertical.

few feet overhead. Crawling up to the

The night of 28/29 May seemed

position Robert Fox found the scene almost

interminable, both for Keeble and for the

surreal - the Paras were joking and chatting

Argentine ground-force commander,

as though they were on a picnic, not in the

Lieutenant Colonel Piaggi. The Paras had

middle of a battle.

now been awake for about 40 hours and had

Major Chris Keeble was now in command.

been fighting for about 14 hours. They had

As he went forward 2 Para's RSM called him

exhausted their own ammunition hours

back. He looked Keeble in the eye and said,

earlier, and had kept the battle going by

'You, sir, are going to do fucking well!' Keeble

using captured Argentine ordnance. Some,

recalled that as he made his way forward he

indeed, had abandoned their own sub-felt like a million dollars. A Company was

machine guns and Self-Loading-Rifles (SLRs)

clearly in a mess. Keeble therefore

for the Argentine FN30, which could be

concentrated on the right flank. B Company

converted to fully automatic by the flick of a

managed to pull back from exposed positions

lever. The Argentines were also exhausted.

on the left of Darwin Hill, and worked south

Despite their overwhelming numerical

to attack Boca House, which they bombarded

superiority, they had been forced back

with Milan wire-guided anti-tank missiles.



steadily throughout the day. That night most  
Further west, Major Phil Neame pulled  
Paras thought they had lost the battle, but  
D Company down a low cliff on to a narrow  
decided to carry on as though they hadn't.  
beach. Protected by the cliff from Argentine  
The Argentines also thought they had lost  
fire Neame now led his Paras in single file  
the battle and decided the sensible thing to



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do was surrender. The British had suffered  
supported by mortar and artillery fire and

17 dead and 33 wounded, the Argentines  
ground attack aircraft. Moreover, the  
55 dead and 86 wounded. In addition,  
attacking British, at the end of a long supply  
1,536 physically uninjured Argentines  
line, frequently ran short of ammunition,  
became prisoners of war.  
and were able to maintain the attack only by  
The battle of Darwin-Goose Green defied  
re-equipping themselves from Argentine  
the logic of force ratios. The British never  
positions as they overran them. The  
achieved more than parity at the point of  
attack and overall were heavily outnumbered  
Islanders reported that in the last stages of the occupation  
by the Argentines, who were well dug in,  
terrified Argentine troops believed that the British were  
not taking prisoners. In fact once they became prisoners  
equipped with automatic weapons, supplied  
many troops received the first warm food and medical  
with large quantities of ammunition, and  
attention they had had in days. (Gamma)



The fighting 55  
surrendering Argentines could not at first  
factors - leadership, training, morale, esprit  
believe they had been defeated by a force less  
de corps, and fighting spirit. In Britain news  
than one-third the size of their own. Piaggi  
was particularly mortified because he had  
The Yomp/Tab. The Royal Marines Yomp and the Paras  
reported to Stanley at one stage that he was  
Tab. Whatever the name, the march of the heavily laden

being attacked by the entire British brigade.

Marines and Paras across East Falkland was an epic of

endurance. The most highly trained infantry in the world

The logic of war dictated that the

at that time, the loss of the helicopters was not going to

paratroopers should not have won, but they

immobilise the Marines and Paras while they still had

did. The victory depended on unquantifiable

their legs. (MOD, print from MARS)

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of the battle led to a massive upsurge in

In the meantime 45 Commando and

parliamentary and national morale: the last

3 Para had been marching towards Teal Inlet.

time Britain had celebrated a crushing

The leading elements of 45 Commando

victory was in 1945. Elsewhere the news was

reached Douglas settlement at about 1300 on

greeted with disbelief and then, as the facts

28 May while 3 Para arrived at Teal Inlet at

became irrefutable, with incredulity. Britain's

2300 the same evening. Early the following

international prestige rose steadily. The

morning they were joined by a troop of light

battle had a profound effect on the conduct

tanks from the Blues and Royals. The move

of the campaign. The gloom and

secured the shoreline of Port Salvador which

despondency that gripped Menendez and his

at one point, Estancia Bay, lay only 15 miles

headquarters soon infected many Argentine

north-west of Stanley. On 30 May, however,

officers, though most conscripts remained

two Argentine UH-1 Iroquois helicopters

unaware of the scale of the defeat. Two Para's

deposited a patrol of 16 men at Top Malo

attack also served to confirm Menendez's

House which sat athwart the main line of

preconception that the drive on Stanley

communication between Teal Inlet and would come from the south, probably along Estancia Bay, from where they would have the axis of the Fitzroy-Stanley track. On a good view of British operations. It was a 29 May he ordered 4th Infantry regiment daring move but it had been spotted by a to occupy Two Sisters and Mt Harriet, British observation post. Soon after dawn on which would cover an advance from the 31 May 19 men of the Royal Marines south-west.

Mountain and Arctic Warfare cadre landed During the battle for Darwin-Goose by helicopter in a valley out of sight of Top Green, the Argentines had moved reserve Malo House and moved stealthily on the forces positioned in the Mt Kent area to Argentine position. A fierce firefight ensued, reinforce Piaggi's increasingly beleaguered in which every member of the Argentine soldiers. Unknown to the Argentines, this patrol was killed or captured.

move allowed 22 SAS, which had been On the night of 31 May/1 June an LCU infiltrating on to Mt Kent since the night of conducted an improvised sweep of the main 24/25 May, to secure much of the area channel through Port Salvador. The without a fight. By 29 May, when the following night *Sir Percivale* made the first Argentines finally discovered that the logistic run from San Carlos, bringing with it British had seized a mountain that a Royal Corps of Transport Mexeflote to land commanded splendid views of their supplies at Teal Inlet. A round trip from Teal positions to the west of Stanley, the British to 3 Para's positions was about 15 miles, as

were firmly established. That night two  
opposed to 100 miles from San Carlos. The  
large Argentine special force patrols  
whole business of supply was speeded up,  
attempted to recapture the mountain.  
but life for the troops investing Stanley  
Ambushed by the SAS, the Argentines  
remained unpleasant. Vincent Bramley, a  
fought all night, losing two dead and six  
3 Para Lance Corporal, recalled that  
captured. The following night the Tactical  
HQ of 42 Commando with K Company, the  
*within two weeks we looked like a rag and*  
Mortar Troop, and three light guns flew to  
*bone army. Our faces were drawn with the loss*  
reinforce the SAS. A search through  
*of weight, our uniforms matted and soaked, we*  
abandoned Argentine positions on the  
*were hungry for solid food, and our boots, badly*  
mountain yielded an invaluable prize; a  
*and cheaply made, were falling to pieces.*  
map that showed the location of every  
Argentine unit and the boundaries within  
The men tried to dig weapons' pits into  
which it was expected to operate. It was  
the peat, and found that very soon they were  
clear from the dispositions that Argentine  
half full of water. At night the temperature  
attention was fixed on the southern axis.  
fell to below freezing, there were frequent



## The fighting 57

snow squalls, and the wind never seemed to  
 Panama and Spain. Parsons managed to  
 drop below about 15 knots. Once men  
 delay the vote in the Security Council until  
 became wet they stayed wet. There was water  
 4 June, when the resolution was supported  
 aplenty, but all of it was heavily polluted  
 by nine countries, including China and the  
 with peat. The men drank it nevertheless -  
 USSR, with four abstaining. Britain was  
 there was nothing else - and the result was  
 forced to use her veto, and was supported by  
 that virtually everyone suffered from chronic  
 the United States. Almost immediately,  
 diarrhoea, to the extent that most cut the  
 however, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, the US  
 seat out of their trousers. Trench foot, a  
 ambassador to the UN, announced that were  
 condition associated with the wetter parts of  
 it possible to do so, she would change the  
 the Western Front during the First World  
 American vote from a no to an abstention.  
 War, soon became widespread.

With Britain's international strategy

On 30 May Major General Jeremy Moore

apparently in the process of unravelling,

and his staff had arrived at San Carlos.

Moore rushed ahead with the deployment of

Moore approved Thompson's existing plans

5 Infantry Brigade, which had arrived in San

and Thompson, reverting to the command

Carlos on 2 June after cross-decking from the

of 3 Commando Brigade, removed himself

*QE2* in Cumberland Sound on the coast of

and his HQ to Teal Inlet the following day.

South Georgia. Moore had travelled south

Pressure on Moore to bring operations to a

aboard the *QE2* with 5 Infantry Brigade's

speedy conclusion was now intense. On

commander, Brigadier Tony Wilson: during

31 May President Reagan phoned Mrs

this time it was agreed that 5 Infantry

Thatcher to voice his worries over the tide of

Brigade would join in the attack on Stanley

hostile opinion that seemed to be sweeping

Latin America, an indication that American

support was becoming less steadfast. In New

5 Brigade landing at San Carlos water Congestion at

York, Britain's ambassador to the United

the beachhead was to some extent unavoidable, but it

also suggests that the soldiers of 5 Brigade had yet

Nations, Sir Antony Parsons, was facing yet

to experience an air attack. (Department of War Studies,

another ceasefire resolution, this time from

Sandhurst)

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by coming from the south. Moore intended

5 Infantry Brigade's battalions, the 2nd Scots

initially to move 5 Infantry Brigade by

Guards, and then only as far as Lively Point,

helicopter to Goose Green, a first step to



about halfway between San Carlos and  
opening up the southern axis of advance  
Fitzroy. Here the Scots Guards transferred to  
via the settlement of Fitzroy. However,  
*Intrepid's* four landing craft under the  
5 Infantry Brigade had set sail with painfully  
command of Major Ewan Southby-Tailyour  
inadequate logistic assets. They would only  
for the remainder of the voyage, while  
be able to move with the aid of logistic  
*Intrepid* put about for the comparative safety  
support removed from 3 Commando  
of San Carlos. At first sea conditions were  
Brigade. Virtually all the task force's  
relatively good, with poor visibility. But the  
helicopters were committed to the build-up  
weather deteriorated as the landing craft  
and sustainment of 3 Commando Brigade in  
rounded Lively Point. The frigate HMS  
the Mt Kent area.

*Cardiff*, returning from bombarding Stanley,  
Some helicopters were made available on  
sighted the landing craft. She had not been  
2 June to airlift the 1/7th to join 2 Para at  
informed of friendly movements in the area  
Goose Green. The rest of the brigade would  
and thus fired a star shell to illuminate the  
have to march. The Welsh Guards set out on  
craft before attacking. A rapid exchange of  
3 June but after 50 minutes their officers,  
terse signals by Aldiss Lamp only narrowly  
realising their men were already exhausted,  
averted what might have been a serious  
called a halt and returned to San Carlos. In  
friendly-fire incident.

the meantime a patrol from 2 Para had  
Back in San Carlos, the following  
flown in a Scout helicopter 20 miles due east  
afternoon the Welsh Guards embarked in

of Goose Green to Sun Inlet House, from  
HMS *Fearless*. Commodore Clapp, Brigadier  
where they had telephoned Fitzroy, and  
Wilson and Major Southby-Tailyour, who  
learned from the islanders that the small  
had flown by helicopter back from Bluff  
Argentine garrison had withdrawn. On  
Cove, had together formulated a plan.  
hearing this news Major Chris Keeble  
*Fearless* was to carry only two landing craft,  
immediately commandeered the Chinook  
leaving two at San Carlos for logistic  
that had been seconded for logistic work to  
offloading. Off Lively Point, *Fearless* was to  
5 Infantry Brigade for the day, and airlifted  
rendezvous with Southby-Tailyour's four  
two companies and the headquarters of  
landing craft, which would sail from Bluff  
2 Para to Fitzroy. This move, implemented  
Cove to meet her. But when Southby-without the knowledge of Moore's  
Tailyour flew back to Bluff Cove he  
headquarters, posed severe problems.  
discovered three of his landing craft were  
Although some Sea King helicopters were  
missing: not until the following morning did  
detailed to lift the rest of 2 Para to Fitzroy  
he learn that 2 Para had commandeered  
settlement and nearby Bluff Cove, there was  
them to move supplies to Fitzroy. When  
no means immediately available of  
*Fearless* reached the rendezvous point at 0200  
sustaining, let alone reinforcing, 2 Para, who  
on 7 June and could not find Southby-were left with little ammunition and no air  
Tailyour's landing craft, her captain had no  
cover in an advanced position overlooked by  
alternative but to launch the two landing  
an Argentine observation post.  
craft he was carrying, and to return to San

Carlos with the remainder of the Welsh Guards.

With helicopters at a premium, the only

way for Wilson to move the bulk of the

On the afternoon of 7 June the remainder

brigade was by sea. The large amphibious

of the Welsh Guards embarked on *Sir*

ships *Fearless* and *Intrepid* could easily have

*Galahad* and she sailed that night, arriving at

carried out the move in a single lift, but the

Fitzroy at 0800 on the following morning.

navy was reluctant to risk these ships so

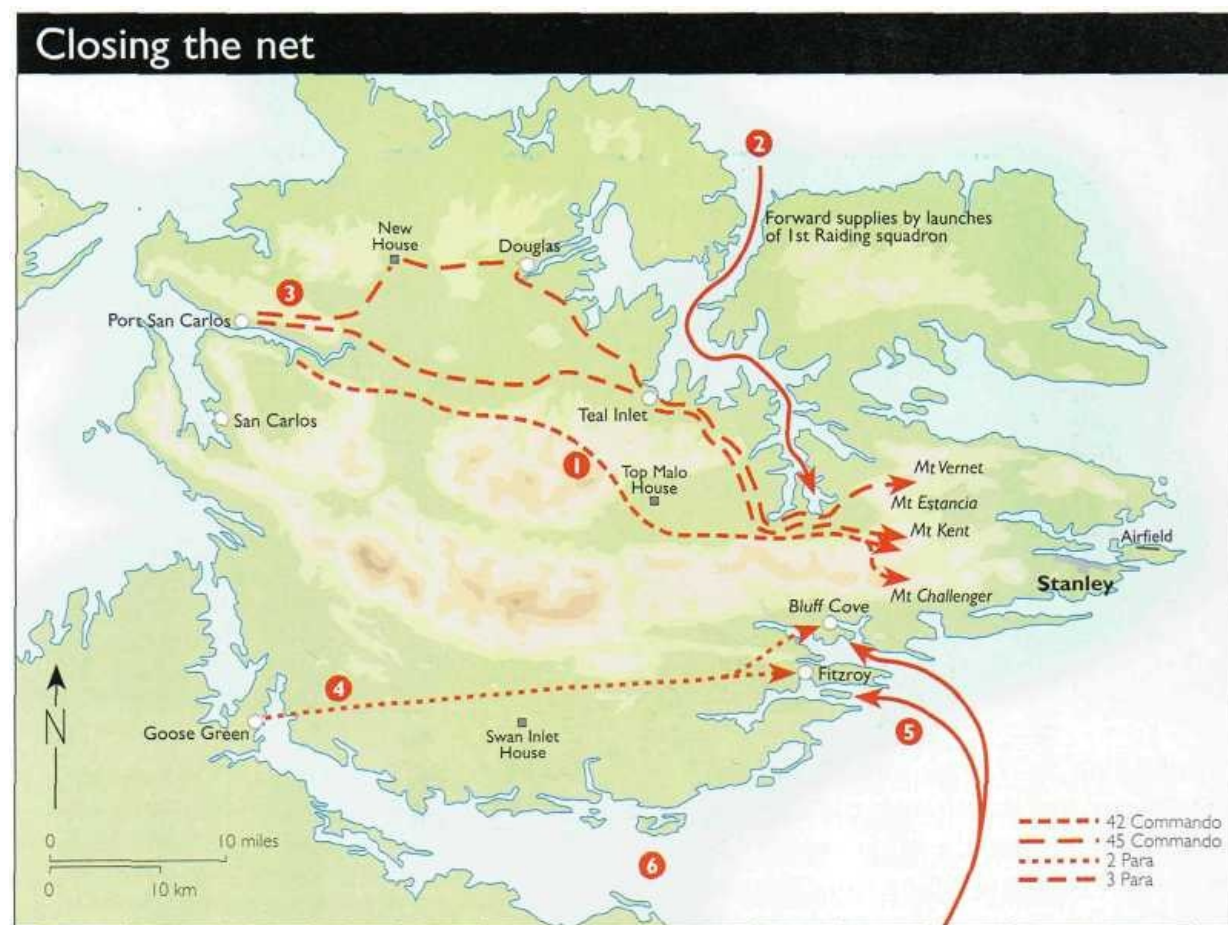
The officers in charge were under the

close to Stanley. As a consequence, on the

impression that they should have been

night of 5/6 June, *Intrepid* carried only one of

landed further east at Bluff Cove, where the



The fighting 59

1. SAS followed by 42 Commando move by helicopter

when it was commandeered by a Lieutenant

to Mt Kent 25-30 May.

Colonel of the RAMC to move his

2. SBS reconnoitre Teal Inlet 25 May. HQ 3 Brigade

ambulance teams ashore.

moves in 1 June.

During the five hours *Sir Galahad* had

3. 3 Para and 45 Commando 'tab' and 'yomp' across the island 27-30 May.

been at anchor, an Argentine observation

4. 2 Para by helicopter 3 June.

post 10 miles away on Mt Harriet had

5. 2 Scots Guards and 1 Welsh Guards move to Fitzroy

radioed details of this and other British

and Bluff Cove by sea 6-8 June.

shipping movements (*Sir Tristram* was also

6. Argentine Skyhawks bomb *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram*

unloading supplies in Fitzroy) via Stanley to

8 June.

mainland Argentine air force units. Mainland

air bases scrambled eight Skyhawks and six

rest of the battalion had bivouacked, and

Daggers, of which five Skyhawks and five

refused to disembark. They were reluctant to

Daggers reached the islands. Flying up

be separated from their heavy equipment,

Falkland Sound before turning to attack

and they could see no point in subjecting

Fitzroy from the west, the Daggers spotted

their men to a tiring overland march when

and bombed HMS *Plymouth*, scoring four

*Sir Galahad* was due to sail to Bluff Cove later

direct hits, none of which detonated. Two

in the day. Major Southby-Tailyour urged

Sea Harriers on routine patrol south of

them to come ashore at any event and wait

Fitzroy turned north-west in pursuit of the

on the beach while unloading was under

Daggers. Meanwhile the Skyhawks flew on to

Fitzroy. The British had already set up four

way: but they again refused because the only

Rapier missile launchers, but the launcher landing craft available were already loaded covering the harbour had been damaged in with ammunition. Early in the afternoon an transit and was out of action while a new unloaded landing craft became free: it was sighting mechanism was being fitted. The on the point of embarking the Welsh Guards



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Skyhawks hit *Sir Tristram* with two bombs, *Sir Galahad* at Bluff Cove, 8 June 1982. With nearly one passing straight through the ship 200 casualties the attack on *Sir Galahad* was the single without detonating, the other exploding on most costly incident of the war for the British. An accretion of errors combined with plain bad luck to the vehicle deck and killing two crewmen. leave the ship exposed to Argentine attack for more The attack on *Sir Galahad* was launched from than four hours. (Rex Features) a higher altitude than usual. Three bombs crashed into the ship, their casings burst 3 Para and 45 and 42 Commando had open, and the explosive contents burnt pushed into the hills and mountains ringing

fiercely, creating fireballs. For the British this Stanley to the west and had largely was the single bloodiest incident of the war: confirmed the dispositions outlined in the 46 men died on *Sir Galahad* and another Argentine map captured on Mt Kent. By the 150 were injured, some very seriously. Two evening of 6 June Thompson believed he hours later the Argentines were back. Four had enough information to launch an attack Skyhawks, attempting to attack Bluff Cove, on Argentine positions on Mt Longdon, Two were driven off by intense ground fire Sisters and Mt Harriet on or about 9 June. from the Scots Guards, who discharged Logistics continued to be a problem, 18,500 rounds in just 45 seconds. Swinging particularly the stockpiling of artillery around on Fitzroy, the Skyhawks ammunition. For an assault Thompson encountered a barrage of at least seven reasoned that each of the task force's 105mm Rapier missiles, and broke off the attack. Yet guns required 500 rounds, making a total of another flight of four Skyhawks spotted the 15,000 rounds, the movement of which landing craft *Foxtrot Four* halfway between would require at least 315 Sea King flights. Goose Green and Fitzroy and launched a Thompson also believed that 3 Commando devastating attack, killing six of the crew. Brigade's assault should be supported by The landing craft was saved from almost 5 Infantry Brigade: the attack of 8 June certain destruction by the arrival of two Sea meant that there would be a delay. On Harriers, which promptly shot down three of 9 June Major General Moore visited the Skyhawks with Sidewinders.

3 Commando brigade HQ and agreed with Thompson's plan of attack. 3 Commando Meanwhile on the northern side of East Brigade was to be reinforced, with 2 Para Falkland, 3 Commando Brigade's build-up reverting to Thompson's command, and was continuing unabated. Patrols from



The fighting 61 coast, while the 5th Marine Regiment deployed on Tumbledown, Mt Wilson and Sapper Hill. The 4th Regiment, dug in on Mt Harriet and Two Sisters, covered the approach from Fitzroy and Bluff Cove. Only the 7th Regiment on Mt Longdon and Wireless Ridge was in a position to oppose an attack coming from the west or north-west. By this time air support had virtually vanished. The last Aermacchi flew to the mainland on 30 May and the last two serviceable Chinooks left for the mainland on 9 June. Mainland units had now lost 36 aircraft, and could now only conduct hit-and-run raids. Artillery support, however, remained formidable: 42 105mm and three 155mm guns with approximately 10,000 rounds stockpiled by the guns and

more in dumps elsewhere.

Argentine defenders. The performance of the

The morale and condition of Argentine

semi-trained 18-year-old conscripts varied greatly. When

troops varied enormously. Those based in

the fighting started a few curled up in their sleeping bags

Stanley, mainly administrative units and air

and adopted the foetal position. But most fired back and

force personnel, enjoyed warm dry

many died fighting, if only because during night battles it

was well nigh impossible to surrender (Department of

accommodation, showers and hot food.

War Studies, Sandhurst)

Moreover, because they lived amongst the

civilian population of Stanley, they were not

with the attachment of the Welsh Guards,

subjected to shelling and bombing. The troops

brought up to strength by two companies of

dug in along the coast had experienced aerial

40 Commando. 3 Commando Brigade was

and naval bombardment and were more

to attack from the west on the night of

exposed to the elements, but food was

10/11 June, while on the following night

plentiful and they were able occasionally to go

5 Infantry Brigade would attack from the

into Stanley. But the situation was very

more obvious south west.

different for the troops deployed just seven

In Stanley Menendez's attention remained

miles away from Stanley on the hills and

fixed on the south-west route: the activity at

mountains to the west and south-west. The

Fitzroy and Bluff Cove had served to confirm

first snow had fallen on 1 June and at night

his conjectures. In Britain the War Cabinet

temperatures fell to minus 12°C. Some stood

had allowed press speculation about the

up to it better than others. The 5th Marine



extent of British casualties to run riot,

Regiment (usually based in Tierra del Fuego)

creating the impression both in Britain and

coped reasonably well but the 4th Regiment,

Argentina that they had been very heavy.

conscripted in sub-tropical Corrientis province,

Menendez came under pressure to attempt

suffered particularly badly. Many conscripts

an attack towards Fitzroy but firmly resisted.

had little idea of fieldcraft and lived in

He would remain on the defensive, although

unsanitary, waterlogged trenches - diarrhoea,

he believed the British attack had been

frostbite, trench foot and exposure were

seriously delayed.

common. The biggest problem was food.

Although hundreds of ISO containers in

Menendez had some 9,000 men under

Stanley stood filled with provisions, the

his command, of whom about 5,000 were

Argentine logistic command proved incapable

in combat units. The 25th, 6th and

of organising an effective distribution system

3rd Regiments were stationed along the



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Guns of 29 Commando Regiment RA on Mt Kent.

and warships kept up harassing fire, which by

Although not as numerous as Argentine artillery, British

10 June had killed 17 Argentines. The morale

gunners were trained to a much higher standard. The fire

of the front-line troops was fragile rather than

of 29 Commando Regiment was so accurate that the

bad. Most had developed a great hatred of

Argentine's believed that the British were assisted by

micro-processor-based weapon-location radars. In fact,

administrative units and of their own senior

the only aids the British had were maps, range-finders

officers, but the shared privations and the long

and compasses. (Department of War Studies, Sandhurst)

wait in the trenches tended to bond rather

than disunite the young conscripts. They now

for troops just seven miles to the west, who for

had more rather than less unit cohesion, and days at a stretch received nothing more than by and large were in reasonable physical shape cold, dehydrated rations. Some administrative even if uncomfortably dug in. They were also troops at a large Argentine depot at Moody formidably armed.

Brook moved food forward on their own

By the evening of 10 June 3 Commando

volition, charging the conscripts exorbitant

Brigade was ready to attack. The artillery had

prices for rations with which they should have

stockpiled 11,095 shells and additional fire

been issued. Conscripts responded by forming

support was to be provided by automatic

scavenging parties which pilfered from the

4." guns of four warships, each gun capable

depots by night. But movement to and from

of laying down fire equivalent to a battery of

front-line positions was dangerous - every

six 105mm guns. In all, these ships carried

night British patrols penetrated deeply behind

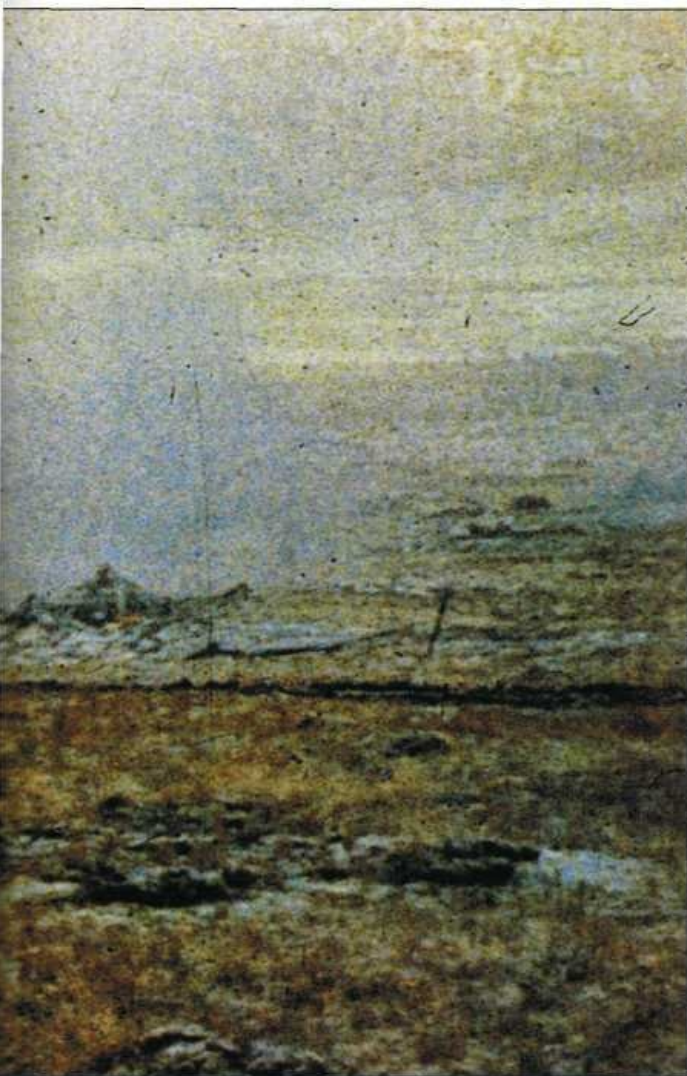
1,400 rounds. The attack was to develop

Argentine positions, while British field artillery

from north to south - 3 Para at 2000,



# British and Argentine dispositions on 11 June 1982



The fighting 63  
42 Commando at 2030 and 45 Commando  
at 2100. Three Para's commander, Lieutenant

Colonel Hew Pike, had been studying the problems of taking his objective, Mt Longdon, for some days. Battalion HQ had built a model of the terrain, and from this it was clear that there was no easy way of taking the feature. From the Paras' positions on the western side of the Murrell River, Mt Longdon appeared to be a peak about 500 yards wide, rising to a crest which towered almost 500 feet over the surrounding moorland. From the eastern side of the peak a narrow ridge some 300 feet high ran back 2,000 yards to a second peak, beyond which lay Wireless Ridge and Port Stanley. Any attempt to attack from the right flank was ruled out, because just to the south over a shallow valley lay Mt Tumbledown, which intelligence had indicated was strongly defended by Argentine Marines. Tumbledown was not due to be attacked until the following night, which meant that 3 Para would be caught in a murderous cross-fire. The alternative, an attack from the north, seemed a better prospect, though the northern side of Mt Longdon was steep, in some places ascending in sheer cliffs 100 feet



## 64 Essential Histories • The Falklands War 1982

Before the battle. A Troop Commander of 42 Commando

The Argentines had improved many natural

briefs his men near Wall Mountain before the assault on

features by tearing up a disused tram line,

Mt Harriet. Because the battles were to be fought at

which ran along Stanley Harbour, and using

night in rough terrain it was essential that each man

understood his commander's intent, because tight

the iron rails to construct top cover - alternate

control would not be possible. (Department of

layers of limestone and peat - which had the

War Studies, Sandhurst)

same protective qualities as compound

armour. In addition, Argentine engineers had

high. Pike decided that he would try a silent

placed hundreds of anti-personnel mines

approach at night from the north and the

along all the obvious approach routes. More

west, in the hope that his Paras would reach

than 300 Argentines were dug in on Longdon,

the lower slopes of Longdon before the  
including a reinforced platoon of the  
Argentines detected them.  
5th Marines. They had carefully positioned  
From his forward observation post Pike  
eight 50 calibre heavy machine guns, had a  
could see that Longdon was a formidable  
number of 120mm mortars and 105mm  
natural obstacle, but he could not see how  
recoilless rifles, and could call on indirect fire  
truly terrible it was. Glaciation, and wind and  
support from the artillery in and around  
water erosion had worn into the western peak  
Stanley.  
a network of crevices and gorges which looked  
Shortly after midnight on 11/12 June  
like the streets and alleys of a medieval stone  
3 Para's A and B Companies crossed the  
village, while the actual peak resembled a  
startline and began their advance. The night  
bombed-out church. The sides of alleys and re-was cold with snow in the wind, but soon  
entrants were riddled with caves, making  
the men were sweating. Everyone was  
Longdon a paradise for the defender, a  
carrying extra grenades, rockets and rifle and  
veritable cut-down version of Monte Cassino.  
machine gun ammunition, making the



average load about 100 lbs. At first thick

B Company. The Paras began moving again,

clouds obscured the moon, but with 500 yards

storming Argentine bunkers one after

left to cover the clouds parted and moon and

another, until they controlled the western

mountain were bathed in pale light. Luck

peak. They now moved eastward, intense fire

remained with them for a little while longer

from Tumbledown to the south forcing them

but then a 4 Platoon section commander,

to keep to the northern side of the ridge. A

Corporal Brian Milne, stepped on an anti-soldier of 3 Para remembered that this phase

personnel mine, which blew off his foot. At

of the battle

first only a few Argentine positions opened

fire, which suggested that the bulk of the

*was just like being on a machine gun*

defenders were asleep, and which gave the

*firing range and everyone was using us as a*

British a few precious moments to get to the

*target. We could see lads going down. I*

base of the mountain. Here they began to

*thought, 'Oh my God, this is real.' I'd never*

move through the maze of alleys, detecting

*seen anything like it before - blokes were*

and destroying some Argentine positions,

*being killed, losing limbs and having their*

but being caught in frequent cross-fire as

*intestines blown out.*

bypassed positions opened up to the rear.

Casualties began to mount, officers were hit,

British artillery fire was now coming

and B Company was soon pinned down.

down in support, and gradually the

With officers now dead and wounded,

Argentines were forced into a grudging

4 Platoon Sergeant Ian McKay gathered



retreat from the eastern peak. 3 Para had together four survivors and attacked up the mountain, storming position after position. close to exhaustion, but it wasn't over yet. His companions were soon dead or wounded Argentine artillery zeroed in on Longdon, but McKay pressed on alone over the summit and for the next 36 hours the Paras were subjected to the most sustained artillery his body was found the following morning, surrounded by dead Argentines. He was to receive a posthumous Victoria Cross.

45 Commando yomps across East Falkland. It was more than 50 miles, the Paras carried packs weighing up to 100 lbs, their boots soon began to disintegrate in the northern side of the mountain, had run into peat bogs and they were soaked to the skin by violent squalls. When they reached Teal Inlet a group stood in a heavily defended spur and had gone to the sleeting rain and sang a song from Monty Python's *Life of Brian* - 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life'.

artillery support, and pushed them through

(Department of War Studies, Sandhurst)



## 66 Essential Histories • The Falklands War 1982

barrage experienced by the British army

to their kit they were carrying 40 Milan

since the summer of 1953 in Korea. Taking

missiles, each weighing 30 lbs) found

and holding Longdon, the Argentine's best

themselves in a maze of bogs and stone cliffs,

natural defensive position, cost the Paras 23

some 50 to 80 feet high. Men were soon

dead and more than 50 wounded. Though

slipping and falling, and one Marine crashed

some conscripts had given up without a

down a 30-foot cliff and was knocked

fight, most Argentines resisted tenaciously.

unconscious, though the second-in-command

The majority of the 50 prisoners taken by

managed to revive him. Meanwhile Y and

the Paras were wounded and the British

Z Companies, coming from the north-west

found at least 50 dead.

over relatively open moorland, had made

To the south of Mt Longdon, the Royal

much better time. Directly to the north,

Marines of X,Y and Z Companies of

3 Para's attack on Mt Longdon was now under

45 Commando had crossed the Murrell River

way, tracer bullets and exploding mortar

about half an hour after 3 Para had begun its

bombs lighting the sky. Now well behind

advance, and moved towards Two Sisters. This

schedule, X Company moved up the western

ridge, with its western and eastern peaks, was

peak, but about halfway up ran into fire from

potentially a very strong position, along which

two machine guns. The Marines lobbed mortar

some 300 Argentines with mortars and heavy

bombs onto the Argentine positions, but after

machine guns had dug in. The Marine's

a few rounds the base plates of the mortars

commander, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew

dug into the peat, making it impossible to aim

Whitehead, intended that X Company should

the weapons. There was no artillery available,

put in a frontal attack on the westernmost

peak to attract the attention of the defenders,

while Y and Z Companies came in from the

After the battle. A Royal Marine checks the body of a

north and hit the Argentines in the right

dead Argentine. Fighting in darkness from holes in the

flank. After only a few hundred yards, the

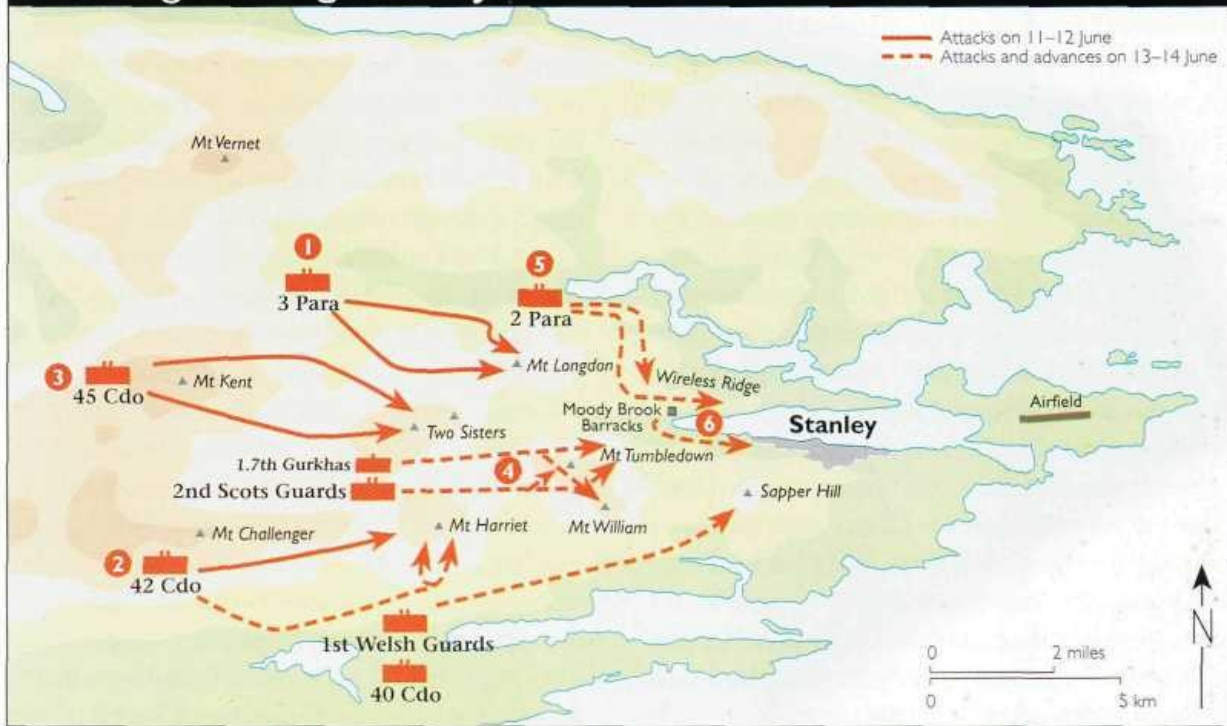
rock and at very close quarters, many Argentines had

no option other than to fight to the death. (Department

heavily laden men of X Company (in addition

of War Studies, Sandhurst)

## Breaking the ring 11–14 June



### The fighting 67

so X Company fired its Milan anti-tank  
could dominate the south-western approach  
missiles at the Argentines, as infantry threaded  
to Port Stanley. Visibility was excellent,  
their way through a maze of boulders to close  
observers having a bird's-eye view down to  
on their positions.  
the coast, a little more than two miles to the  
On the northern slopes of Two Sisters,  
south, while on a clear day they could see as  
Y and Z Companies had managed to avoid  
far as Fitzroy and Bluff Cove. The feature,  
being hit by an Argentine artillery  
about three-quarters of a mile long,  
bombardment, but had been pinned by the  
comprised a steep 700-foot horseshoe-fire of 50 calibre heavy machine guns.  
shaped peak, with sheer cliffs to the west,  
Argentine mortar bombs now landed just to  
and a box canyon to the east. Running  
the rear of Z Company, and the Marines,  
several hundred yards further east was a  
realising they were bracketed, rose to their feet

ridge topped by a spine of rocks. About  
and shouting the Company war cry 'Zulu!  
three hundred Argentines had dug in along  
Zulu!' charged up the slope. Y Company  
the ridge, using the stony spine as a  
joined in the fight, overrunning an enemy  
battlement. From his forward observation  
machine gun post. Many of the defenders now  
post on Wall Mountain, Lieutenant Colonel  
panicked and some 250 withdrew hurriedly  
Nick Vaux, the commander of 42  
towards Tumbledown. They had suffered  
Commando, could see that an attack due  
10 dead and 54 wounded. The attacking  
east would come up against Mt Harriet's  
companies of 45 Commando had overcome a  
most difficult aspect, cliffs which in places  
force equivalent to their own strength after  
were between 50 and 100 feet high. If he  
suffering only four dead and 10 wounded.  
went north he ran the risk of a 'blue on  
blue' with 45 Commando, then moving on  
One and a half miles south of Two Sisters  
Two Sisters. He therefore decided to launch  
lay Mt Harriet, from which the Argentines

1. 3 Para attacks Mt L o n g d o n 11/12 June
4. 2 Scots Guards attacks Mt T u m b l e d o w n 13/14 June
2. 45 C o m m a n d o attacks T w o Sisters 1 1 / 1 2 June
5. 2 Para attacks Wireless Ridge 13/14 June
3. 42 C o m m a n d o attacks Mt H a r r i e t 11/12 June
6. A r g e n t i n e surrender 2 1 3 0 (Local T i m e ) 14 June

#### Essential Histories • The Falklands War 1982

a diversionary attack due west with  
morning. British warships had bombarded  
J Company, while he sent 42 Commando's K  
suspected Argentine artillery positions  
and L Companies on an outflanking march  
throughout the night without success,  
to the south-east. Moving across heavily

bringing their fire ever closer to the mined terrain on previously reconnoitred western edge of the town; indeed one shell routes, K and L Companies skirted the had landed in the town, killing three northern shores of Port Harriet inlet, before Falkland Islanders. It was against these they turned north-west to attack Mt Harriet warships that the Argentines scored their from the south-east, the one direction the solitary success of the night. One of the Argentines were not expecting.

bombarding ships, HMS *Glamorgan*, The Royal Marines had luck on their side. remained on station later than intended to Vaux had been able to secure artillery support the attack on Two Sisters. In order support for his diversionary attack, and this to clear Stanley by dawn, her captain took attracted the attention of the Argentinians. her just within range of a land-based In addition, the battle for Longdon had Exocet launcher, and she suffered a direct begun seven miles to the north, so that hit on the stern. Thirteen crewmen were many of the soldiers had turned around to killed and *Glamorgan* was out of action for watch the explosions and tracer fire. About the final hours of the war.

700 yards south-east of Mt Harriet, K and Moore had originally planned to launch L Companies formed up on a wire fence and the second phase of the attack, the assaults pushed forward. The Argentines were caught on Tumbledown and Wireless Ridge, on the by surprise. The Royal Marines stormed night of 12/13 June. But British artillery through the barrier, sending most of the had expended so much ammunition that

startled defenders running to the west. The  
by this stage none of the 30 guns had more  
British pursued them, pushing the  
than a few rounds left. It would take a full  
Argentines into the box canyon on the  
day's flying by Sea Kings to restock to just  
eastern side of Mt Harriet, from where  
300 rounds per gun, barely sufficient for  
there was no escape. The defenders soon  
the coming battle. Moreover, many of the  
appeared amongst the rocks waving pieces  
guns needed to be re-sited. They were too  
of white cloth. In all, the British took  
far to the west to give effective support for  
250 prisoners, and found a further 10 dead  
the new attacks without using supercharge,  
in the rocks. 42 Commando had suffered  
which would shake the lay of the gun and  
just 11 casualties, of which only one was a  
make fire inaccurate. In addition, in many  
fatality.

places the ground was so soft that after as  
At the main command post in Stanley,  
few as 30 rounds some guns had sunk up to  
the field commander for the Stanley area,  
the layer's seat, and had simultaneously  
Brigadier General Joffre, had attempted  
moved back as much as 10 yards. The  
to launch a counter-attack against  
resiting of the guns was disrupted by  
Mt Longdon. At 0300 a company of the  
11 Skyhawks sweeping in from the  
3rd Regiment defending the coast south of  
mainland. Fortunately for the British their  
Stanley was ordered to move north to  
target was not the heavily laden Sea Kings  
Moody Brook, and thence by a track to  
but 3 Commando Brigade's Headquarters,

Mt Longdon. The first part of the move, a  
upon which they made seven separate  
distance of only four miles, took five hours;  
unsuccessful attacks. Brigadier Wilson had  
dawn was breaking as they prepared to set  
also requested a 24-hour delay to enable  
off along the track and the move was  
5 Infantry Brigade to conduct a more  
cancelled. Joffre had already ordered  
detailed reconnaissance of its objective. For  
Argentine artillery fire down on Longdon,  
all these reasons Moore decided to  
Two Sisters and Mt Harriet, and his guns  
postpone the second phase of the attack  
maintained a heavy barrage throughout the  
until the night of 13/14 June.

Portrait of a soldier

Comrades and companeros

The soldiers who fought in the Falklands,

The greatest success one Argentine had was

Argentine and British, were literate and

'to establish some communication with one

many kept diaries and subsequently wrote

of the locals in my broken English. We

memoirs. There are several hundred such

communicated like red-skins in the

accounts, in Spanish and in English. Because

Westerns. "How You?"; "You buy"; "Is good".

the vast majority of the veterans are still

And he more or less understood me.'

relatively young (average age for an

Except for Tierra del Fuego no part of

Argentine is 39, and for a British serviceman

Argentina is as cold, as windy and as wet as

is 43) it would be invidious to single out any

the Falklands. The Argentines were well

particular individual as typical. Rather, it is

equipped. They had excellent boots, and

better to present their experiences as a



warm and generally waterproof parkas  
compendium. Much was made of the fact  
bought from the Israeli Defence Force. Those  
that the Argentine Army was composed of  
who stayed in Port Stanley - perhaps as  
nineteen year old conscripts but most Royal  
many as 5,000 - had a reasonably  
Marines and Paras were only a year or two  
comfortable time. But from about 1 May the  
older. This is not to suggest there was any  
majority had dug into static defence  
equivalence in training, fitness or fighting  
positions. An Argentine private recalled that  
effectiveness - there wasn't. But they were  
'we lived in foxholes and water kept filtering  
essentially young men fighting a long way  
through the peat, so you would find yourself  
from their homes in an alien environment.  
living in the water and ice with no dry  
Many Argentine troops came from the  
clothing. You had to keep as dry as possible  
semi-tropical Corrientes province in the far  
and try to eat as much as possible'. At first  
north. The conscripts of the 5th Infantry  
there was no difficulty but soon British air  
Regiment had only eight days of military  
and naval interdiction began to interfere  
service left when the Junta launched the  
seriously with attempts to sustain the  
invasion. When they received orders to fly to  
outlying garrisons, and it was not surprising  
the Malvinas soldiers recalled 'a sort of party  
that they ran short of food. Much more  
atmosphere - all your friends were going so  
surprising was that many troops in the hills  
you had to go too.' Another remembered  
only seven miles from Stanley harbour  
that 'only our mothers were really worried  
should have existed for weeks at a time on

and they were crying'. Similar scenes were cold composite rations. Argentine senior being played out all over Argentina in the officers did hear their men's complaints but first week of April. The 5th Regiment began dismissed them as the grumbling of nineteen flying into Puerto Argentino on 11 April. year olds who were used to eating steak three Very quickly the conscripts realised that times a day. There was some truth in this but despite the hastily imposed Spanish names the fact remained that body-weight of many they were in a foreign country. One was Argentine troops in frontline positions struck by 'how English it all looked. There declined precipitously, something which was nothing Argentine there. I even should not have happened given that they remember picking up a box of nails which were in static defensive positions. had 'Made in England' on them.' The biggest Argentine front-line units spent an surprise was the attitude of the people. Many average of six weeks living in fox holes, were afraid and virtually all were unfriendly. during which a fatal torpor seems to have



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gripped many. On cold wet mornings they

*just waiting for death.*

stayed in their sleeping bags inside their pup

tents, and paid little or no attention to

And when they did try to counter-attack it

personal administration. It was up to the

was clear their training was woefully deficient.

officers and NCOs to set and maintain a

standard of efficiency, but they were

*Then the order arrived for us to go down into*

sometimes amongst the worst offenders. The

*the valley. We knew that we would be going into*

conscripts knew that they should be cleaning

*direct combat. Everybody was very agitated and*

their equipment, shaving, washing,

*we all talked at the same time. One talked about*

patrolling and doing stags throughout the

*his sister, another about his college. Someone else*

night but they lacked the will to do these

*talked about football, anything to evade the issue.*

things. It was not part of their military

culture. Many experienced sustained

The contrast with the British troops could

bombing and shelling, which should have not have been greater. Unlike the Argentines, shaken them out of their lassitude, but in the Paras and Royal Marines had a six week many cases seemed to reinforce it. voyage to get to the Falklands. The *Canberra* is a floating luxury hotel and the *Norland*, *They would bomb us every night. They would* though not quite to the same standard, is *start working their way down, and when they* comfortable. Six weeks on these ship should *reached the end of our sector they would go back* have destroyed the fighting efficiency of the *to the front and start all over again. The whole* Paras and Marines but it turned out very *world would seem to be coming on top of you.* differently. At the beginning of the voyage *There was a feeling of impotence, as if you were* the commanders and their physical training instructors did a computer analysis of every square foot of deck space and instituted a The first snow of winter fell on 1 June. Temperatures at rigorous training programme. Two weeks out night were well below zero. Most soldiers had diarrhoea of Portsmouth Lieutenant Colonel Hew Pike, and had lost between a quarter and a third of their body commander of 3 Para, recorded in his diary weight. (Department of War Studies, Sandhurst)

#### Portrait of a soldier 71

that the promenade deck of *Canberra*, solid potato patches, so that diaries were soon teak two and a half feet thick, was beginning recording dinners of mutton and baked to crack under the impact of the regime. potatoes. The coast was a veritable When the Marines and Paras landed at San supermarket, with unpolluted mussels and Carlos they were fitter than they had been in

limpets on virtually every rock, and lobsters

Portsmouth.

and crabs in the shallows. The major

At the same time as 3 Para was setting off

deficiency was in fresh vegetables and fruit,

on its 'tab', 45 Commando was on its 'yomp'

though scurvy grass, which grew all over the

across East Falkland. The 'tab-yomp' was a

islands, and is rich in Vitamin C, was eaten

feat of astonishing endurance. The ground

by the handful.

underfoot was often peat bog, soft and

Unlike the Argentines, British morale

springy, so that the heavily laden men

remained high. Whenever they could, they

sometimes sank up to their ankles. Their

attended to their personal administration,

boots were soon soaked through. The

strip washing and shaving. They kept their

soldier's feet slid around inside their boots,

weapons cleaned and oiled, patrolled

rubbing the skin until it was raw and

aggressively and dominated the ground up to

creating blisters. The weather alternated

the Argentine positions. The single most

between brilliant sunshine and sudden

important thing in sustaining British morale

drenching rain squalls, with the wind never

was the regular arrival of mail. Soldiers

dropping below about 15 knots. After dark

received letters not just from families, but

the temperature dropped to below freezing

from well wishers all over Britain, who wrote

and the rain fell as sleet, driven into the

to express their appreciation and their pride.

faces of the exhausted men.

It was the first intimation many had that the

Most British soldiers spent about two

eyes of the world were literally upon them.

weeks in positions to the west of Stanley,

As the time for the final assault drew near during which time weather became steadily the mood of the various regiments was very colder. Logisticians had despatched different. The Scots Guards and Gurkhas thousands of arctic tents to the South were eager to do battle, and the Welsh Atlantic, but had placed most aboard the Guards, the victims of Bluff Cove, were *Atlantic Conveyor*. With no prospect of tents positively thirsting for revenge. It was for some weeks (the first actually arrived on different with the Royal Marines and Paras, 15 June) the troops improvised. While in for they had now been in action. The mood, transit to the Falklands, each man had been as distinct from the morale, of 2 Para was issued with a survival guide to the islands instructive. On 13 June, as they moved prepared by Major Ewan Southby-Tailyour, towards the start line for the attack on whose paper showed how many aspects of Wireless Ridge, they were different from the the apparently forbidding environment men they had been only three weeks earlier. could be turned to advantage. The islands Then they had been anxious for action, as abounded with stones and peat, and soon only professional soldiers who have spent some of the troops investing Stanley had their lives training for this eventuality can built themselves a variety of shelters, many be. Since then they had been in a bloody of which looked like Celtic roundhouses, and battle and had helped treat the wounded of which were suprisingly effective. Lieutenant the Bluff Cove attack. Now there was to be Tony Martin of the Royal Artillery recorded

none of the heroics of Darwin-Goose Green.  
in his diary for 6 June 'It rained through the  
This battle was to be one of the most  
night and all this morning. Still, 1 managed  
ruthlessly professional battles fought by the  
to keep dry in my little house.'  
British Army in the twentieth century. The  
chattering Argentine conscripts moving to  
Food, too, proved to be less of a problem  
meet them on the other side of Wireless  
than at first feared. The islands have over  
Ridge didn't stand a chance.  
600,000 sheep, and all the settlements had



The world around war  
Preparing for the Third  
World War

The Falklands conflict involved Britain and  
guerrilla war in Central America was only a  
Argentina in a struggle for world opinion.  
small part of America's campaign against the  
Both sides recognised that the support of the

'Evil Empire'; of much greater importance

United States was vital to their cause, and in

were simultaneous developments along and

this struggle the British Foreign Office, the

just beyond the frontiers of the Soviet empire,

elite shock troops of the diplomatic world,

and in each of these conflicts the support of

outgunned Argentine diplomats at every turn.

Great Britain was vital.

On a visit to the United States in 1981 Galtieri

In the three years immediately preceding

had been feted by the American military

the Falklands conflict America's position in

establishment as their special ally in the war

the Middle East (the area American

against communist expansion in Central

geopoliticians called South West Asia) had

America. Argentine advisers were working with

been weakened considerably. On 16 January

US special forces in Nicaragua, and Galtieri,

1979, following widespread disturbances

unused to the sometimes overwhelming

effusiveness of American hospitality, seems to

have believed that this presaged the

In 1982 the Iraqi army was receiving large amounts of

equipment from both the USA and USSR. Both super powers

development of a special relationship with the

preferred the 'progressive and secular' regime of Saddam

United States. He forgot, however, that the

Hussein to the Islamic revolutionaries of Tehran. (Gamma)



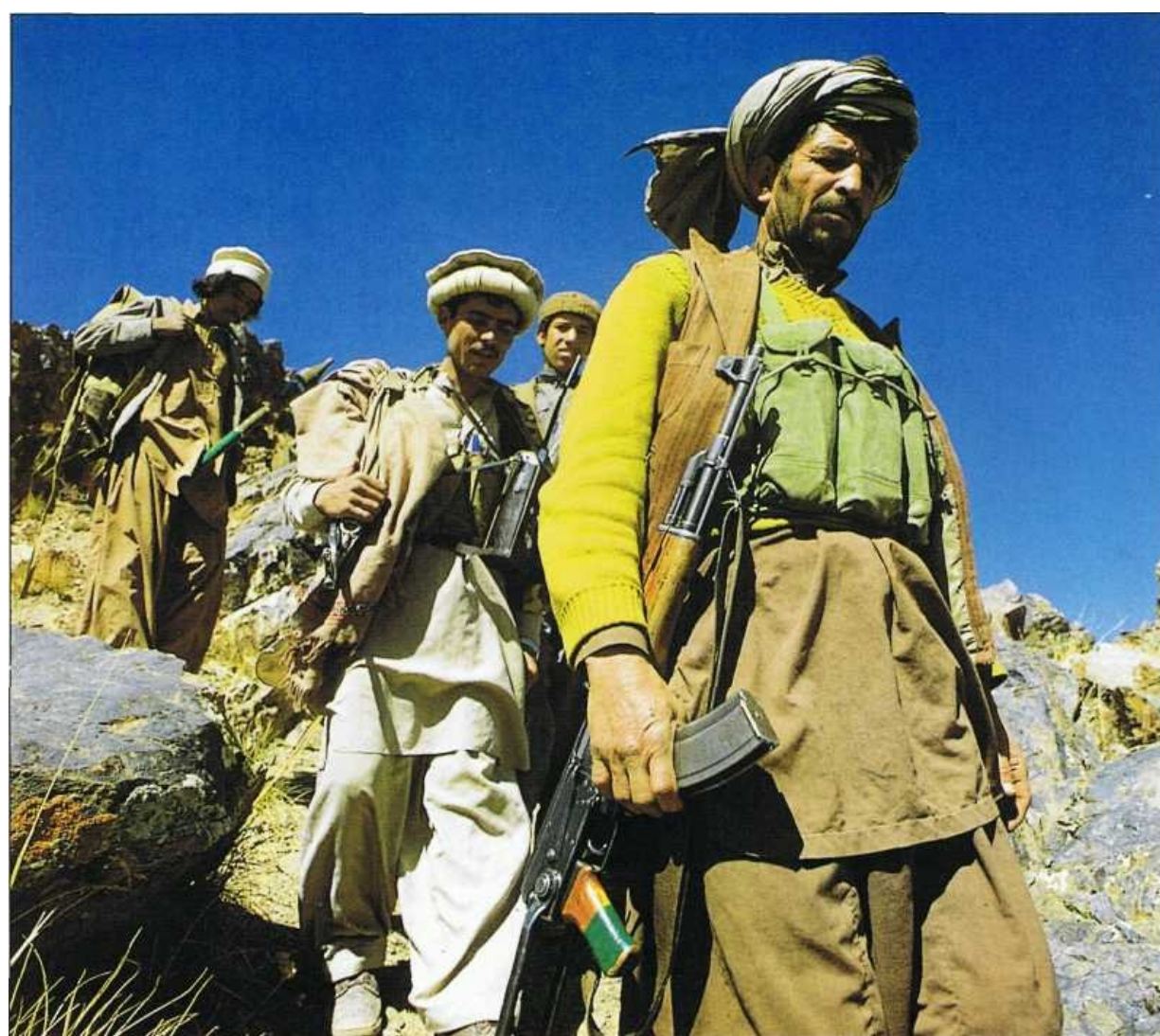


### **The world around war 73**

On 1 October 1982 large numbers of semi-trained  
after considerable bloodshed. And then on  
Iranian Revolutionary Guards launched a major counter-24 December Soviet special forces seized  
offensive against Iraq. After making some progress, the  
Kabul airport, the prelude to a massive  
attack bogged down in sanguinary slaughter (Gamma)  
Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

South West Asia was vital to the American  
throughout Iran, the Shah had been driven  
economy, and to the economies of all other  
into exile. Overnight the lynchpin of  
industrially developed nations. The United  
American policy had been removed. A  
States imported upwards of 40 per cent of its  
radical Islamic regime led by Ayatollah  
oil requirements from the region, and just  
Khomeini had taken power, enunciating  
five years earlier the Americans had had a  
violently anti-American attitudes. On  
terrifying reminder of what life without oil  
4 November 1979 Khomeini's followers  
might be like. It was apparent that the result

stormed the American embassy in Iran, would not just be economic downturn but and took nearly 100 embassy staff and that the very fabric of civilisation could be Marines hostage. Sixteen days later torn apart in a matter of weeks. An attempt 500 heavily armed Shi'ite fanatics stormed by US special forces to rescue the hostages in the Grand Mosque in Mecca within sight of Iran, which ended in a bloody fiasco at a the Kaaba, the holiest place in Islam, and secret base in the Iranian desert on 25 April held hostage thousands of pilgrims. Four 1980, served to underline America's days later Saudi Arabian troops (supported impotence in this region. Exactly five by western soldiers, it was rumoured) months later the Iraqi army invaded Iran; on the night of 25 September the oil refinery at recaptured the Grand Mosque in a ferocious Abadan, the largest in the world, was ablaze. gun battle in which hundreds died. On In the previous 18 months oil prices had 21 November a huge mob in Islamabad, tripled and seemed set to rise further, thus believing that the Americans had been deepening the recession which was involved in the seizure of the Grand beginning to be felt around the world. It was Mosque, had stormed the American embassy to Britain, with her wealth of experience in and were driven off by Pakistani troops only



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the Middle East, and her residual bases, to

Of equal concern to Britain and the

which America now turned.

United States in 1982 was their relationship

Thus it was that in 1982, while Britain

with the USSR in Europe. Since its formation

and Argentina battled it out for possession of

in October 1980, Solidarity, the new Polish

the Falklands, two major wars were raging in

trade union, had shaken communist rule in

South West Asia. Britain had joined the USA

Poland to its core. In the autumn of 1981

in supplying weapons and training to

the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, had

Afghan rebels. After some hesitation both

issued a grim warning to the Polish

nations were also supplying Iraq, though

Communist Party that the time had come to

Britain also sold weapons to Iran. Of great

bring the Solidarity free trade union

importance to America were the British

movement to heel. In December the Polish

Indian Ocean Territories, the largest island of

premier, General Jaruzelski, proclaimed

which, Diego Garcia, was rapidly being

turned into a huge base from which

With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan into its third year.

American and allied forces could be deployed

Afghan guerrillas were receiving large quantities of

and sustained throughout the Gulf region.

weapons from the USA and China. An indication of the

A new American command, Central

approaching dissolution of the communist system was

Command, was being set up and was

the fact that American agents were able to buy

preparing to run a series of deployment

substantial numbers of weapons from within the Soviet

bloc, before passing them on to their erstwhile allies

exercises codenamed 'Bright Star'.

beyond the Khyber Pass. (Gamma)

The world around war 75

martial law, which led to widespread clashes

be the provision of a forward anti-submarine

between workers and soldiers in the Silesian

screen for the United States Navy, and the

coal fields and the Gdansk ship yards, in

maintenance of Britain's ultimate deterrent, a

which at least seven people had been shot.

squadron of Trident submarines. Hence the

As 1982 dawned more than 14,000 trade

suspicion of the alacrity with which the

union activists had been arrested and

senior officers of the Royal Navy had accepted

imprisoned, the prelude to an outright ban

the challenge of retaking the Falklands.

of Solidarity on 8 October.

Britain had also agreed to the United States

The United States and Britain had

basing Cruise missiles at various sites in

watched the destabilisation of the Soviet

southern England, including the base at

empire in Eastern Europe with a mixture of

Greenham Common outside Newbury. In

pleasure and apprehension - pleasure

September 1982 women peace protesters

because it was an indication of the fragility

began arriving to set up a peace camp outside

of the communist system and apprehension

the base. At first the local authorities ignored

because leaders in both countries knew that

their activities, but as their numbers grew the

when empires enter their death throes the

authorities made two attempts to evict them.

result is invariably war. After the failed

On 12 December 1982 the 'Greenham

attempts at conciliation during the Carter

Women' gave a demonstration of how

presidency, the new Reagan administration

powerful they had become when more than

was pursuing a policy of confrontation,

20,000 protesters surrounded the base and

pushing the Cold War into its last and, in

clasped hands. The 'embrace the base' protest

some respects, most dangerous phase. The

attracted enormous media attention, both in

level of military co-operation between

Britain and throughout the world. Some of

Britain and the USA, always close, had now

the women tied toys and baby-clothes to the

become intimate. At Fort Monroe in Virginia

wire, others pinned up photographs of war

the US Training and Doctrine Command

victims and peace poems. Huge cobwebs of

promulgated a new doctrine for the US Army

cotton were woven into the fence

and Air Force, the doctrine of Airland Battle.

representing the campaign's symbol of a tiny

Unlike the previous doctrine of Active

missile trapped in a web. Herein lay the

Defense, which argued that NATO forces

rebirth of the Campaign for Nuclear

should remain on the defensive. Airland

Disarmament, whose activities increased

Battle argued that allied troops on the inner

dramatically as the Soviet system entered its

German border should employ new

final stages.

technology and techniques to strike deep

On 6 June 1982, with the attention of the

into the heart of Soviet formations,

world focused on events in the South Atlantic,

penetrating at least 124 miles (200 km)

six Israeli armoured and mechanised divisions,

eastward. Many in Europe had been terrified

comprising some 3,000 armoured fighting

of what they saw as provocation of the

vehicles and more than 80,000 men, crossed the

USSR, but British Chiefs of Staff quickly

border into southern Lebanon. Advancing

incorporated it into British practice.

through mountains on roads which were

However, the adoption of the more

sometimes little better than goat tracks, the

aggressive American doctrine would only be

Israeli columns were frequently ambushed by

possible if there were to be a reallocation of

the fighters of the Palestine Liberation

the British defence budget. Many senior

Organisation (PLO). On 9 June the Israeli Air

soldiers could not see the point of having a

Force (IAF) attacked and destroyed Syrian anti-navy which was capable of supporting world

aircraft missile batteries in Lebanon's Bekaa

wide commitments when it was obvious that

Valley, while IAF fighters shot down more than  
there was massive danger only half an hour's  
80 Syrian interceptors for not a single Israeli  
flying time from the United Kingdom. The  
casualty. This result was only partly the product  
Royal Navy's role, the soldiers argued, should  
of superior Israeli training; it was also the



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product of the new Sidewinder air-to-air  
fighters began to evacuate the city, firing  
missile, the effectiveness of which had just  
guns into the air and chanting, as though  
been demonstrated in the fighting in the  
they had been victorious rather than beaten.  
Falklands.

As he left by boat for Athens Arafat issued a  
With undisputed control of the air the  
long farewell message to the Lebanese  
Israelis were able to use helicopters to supply  
people, thanking them for the sacrifices they  
their columns and the advance picked up  
had made in the cause of the Palestinian  
speed. On 11 June, with their tanks and  
revolution. 'No matter how much I try,' he  
self-propelled guns on the mountains above  
said, 'I am still unable to express my  
Beirut, the Israeli army began shelling the  
gratitude and feelings and admiration  
city, in an effort to drive out Yassir Arafat  
towards this country which has embraced  
and the PLO. The Israelis succeeded, but only  
our people with love and affection.'  
after six weeks of bitter fighting, in which  
But the departure of the PLO did not bring  
scores of Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers  
peace. On 17 September Lebanese Christian  
and hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese  
militia allied to the IDF began a bloody  
were killed. On 30 August, 7,000 PLO  
massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of





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Sabra and Chatila in West Beirut. Men, along with 241 US Marines and 58 French women and children were ruthlessly shot paratroopers. Another terrorist drove a truck down, and their bodies thrown in piles in the at the British compound but the military streets. The IDF claimed that as soon as they policemen on duty had seen much service in knew the massacre was taking place they Northern Ireland and shot the driver dead. In took steps to stop it, but it was not just the a blind rage, America and France lashed out, Arab world that remained unconvinced. In bombing and shelling suspected Hezbollah

the aftermath, US Marines, the French positions. All they succeeded in doing was Foreign Legion and Italian forces arrived in killing more Lebanese civilians, and creating Beirut to keep the peace. Here they were ever more martyrs to be avenged.

joined in December by a small British During the Falklands conflict Britain still armoured reconnaissance unit. On had to contend with terrorism from the IRA.

23 October 1983 Hezbollah terrorists drove

On 20 July, only weeks after the Falklands trucks filled with explosives into the victory parade, a car bomb exploded on headquarters of the French and American South Carriage Road in Hyde Park, as a peace-keeping forces and killed themselves detachment of the Blues and Royals trotted by. Two guardsmen were killed and

17 spectators injured. Seven horses were either killed by the blast or had to be

destroyed. Two hours later, as the band of

the Royal Green Jackets were playing a

selection from *Oliver*, another bomb

exploded under the bandstand in Regent's

Park, killing six soldiers and injuring

another 24. One bandsman was hurled

nearly 50 yards, his dismembered body

impaled on the park railings. Killings in

Northern Ireland also continued unabated.

The worst incident occurred on 6 December

when 16 people, including 11 soldiers, were

killed when a bomb ripped through a pub

disco in the village of Ballykelly. Interviewed

by the BBC's Robert Fox during the fighting

at Darwin-Goose Green, a 2 Para NCO said

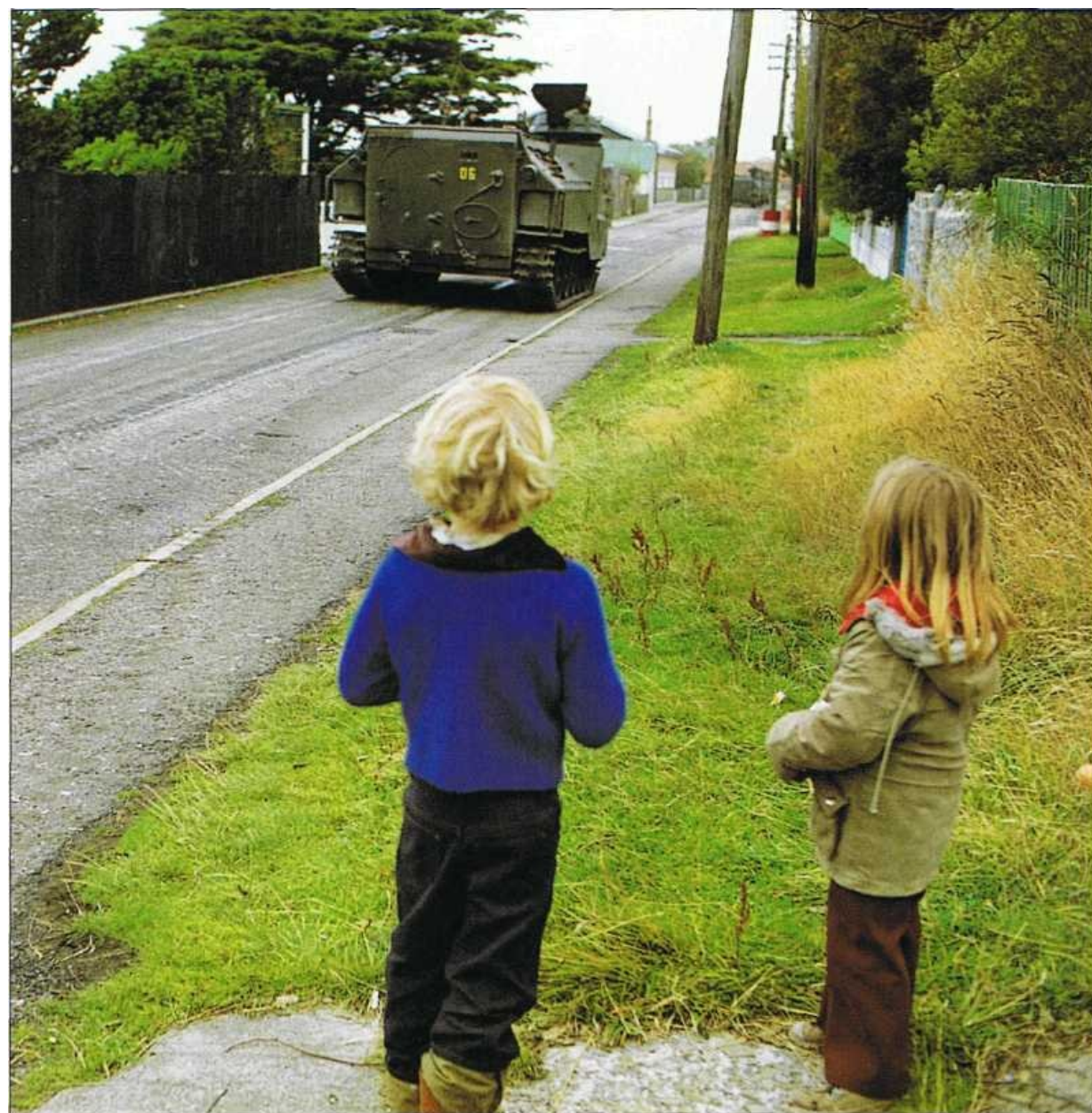
that he was happy to be fighting against

soldiers, and not 'the cowards of the IRA'.

But the Falklands were only a brief

interlude. Most of the Paras who fought in the Falklands were to see service again in Northern Ireland, and some who had survived the mortars and machine guns of Darwin-Goose Green and Longdon were to fall victim to snipers in South Armagh and car bombs in Belfast.

Beirut. 12 June 1982. As the final battles for Stanley were fought, the Israeli army opened fire on PLO positions in Beirut, causing widespread destruction to what had once been the 'Paris of the Arab World'. Televised around the world, the pictures were a propaganda disaster for Israel. (Gamma)



Portrait of a civilian

An islander's ordeal: The diary

of John Smith

The Falkland Islanders were the first British detailed diary, which recorded the transition population to experience enemy occupation from a simple but idyllic existence to the of their homeland since the Nazis occupied nightmare world of the battlefield. The first the Channel Islands in June 1940. John intimation of what was to come was when Smith, a manager of the Falkland Islands Company, had first visited the islands in Falkland Islands children watch a column of Argentine 1957. After several more visits he and his Amtracks grind down a Stanley street. The amount of wife Ileen decided to set up a guest house in armour the Argentines felt necessary is testimony to the Stanley. As the crisis unfolded he kept a respect in which they held the Royal Marines. (Gamma)

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his oldest sons, Martyn and Jeremy, returned being treated correctly. At about 1100 an from a trip to Sapper Hill on 1 April, Argentine captain arrived, congratulated reporting that Royal Marines were taking them on a good fight, and they were coils of barbed wire in lorries down towards then escorted back to their homes by the airport. That night the Smiths, like Argentine personnel.

everyone else in the Falklands, sat glued to The immediate reaction to the invasion their radios, listening to announcer Mike was shock. Everything had changed.

Smallwood run his Record Requests Argentine amphibious landing vehicles 'were programme, which he interrupted frequently rushing and roaring about all over the place, with messages from the governor. At 2015 knocking down fences, breaking up the

Governor Rex Hunt announced that roads; troops and guns are everywhere. It's invasion was imminent, and that all like living in a nightmare.' Around midday members of the Falkland Island Defence islanders began venturing out, bits of white Force were to report to the Drill Hall cloth tied to sticks, to buy bread at the immediately for duty. Smith recorded that Upland Goose Hotel. Smith recorded the his boys looked at each other and said 'This sense of loss and pride he and others felt as is it'. They struggled into their combat gear they saw the governor in full regalia, Union and reported to the Drill Hall, only to come Jack flying from his car, drive to the airport. back a short time later to pick up rations - Soon other expatriates were being ordered to tea and sandwiches to last them through the leave. With their possessions hurriedly night. It was only then that the reality that packed into a few suitcases they reminded his sons were going off to fight alongside the Smith of refugees. As he walked past Royal Marines hit Smith. Martyn was just 18. Government House on the evening of the He recorded that the farewell was very swift: first day of the occupation Smith saw the 'God Bless and Good Luck said with a depth Argentine flag flying from the mast. He of sincerity which we hope we will never 'really felt physically sick and emotionally have to use again.' drained; the cold light of awful reality set in.'

On Sunday 4 April the congregation at the At 0540 the governor announced that evening service in the cathedral sang 'Auld Argentine landing craft had been sighted. Lang Syne' at the close, which was 'very,

Five minutes later, with dawn breaking, very moving'.  
Smith heard the first explosions and firing.  
He recorded that for the next three hours  
Some of the islanders refused to  
the firing was more or less continuous.  
acknowledge the invaders. Mabel Neilson, a -  
Royal Marines passed by opposite the house,  
formidable old lady, was seen elbowing  
and opened fire up King Street. Smith  
Argentine soldiers out of the way as they tried  
thought that 'it was just like watching a  
to prevent her entering the post office to  
film. We could not believe that it was  
collect her pension. The weather, too,  
happening in front of us on the other side  
conspired to discomfort the Argentines. The  
of the road.' The radio provided not just  
high wind caused their voluminous ponchos  
information but first rate drama, because the  
to blow up over their heads, rendering them  
announcer, Patrick Watts, left the  
temporarily blind and complete!)' out of  
transmitter open as the Argentines stormed  
control, 'so much so that a couple of them  
the station. 'No, I don't do anything until  
have accidentally fired their rifles while trying  
you take that gun out of my back,' Watts  
to disentangle themselves'. On 7 April the  
said to the Argentine commandos. 'He  
wind gusted up to 50 knots. With considerable  
deserves a medal' was Smith's pithy  
relish Smith reported that 'the huge Argentine  
comment. He was worried sick about his  
flag hoisted on the pole outside the Secretariat  
boys, but all members of the Falkland  
flapped itself out of control, snapped the pole  
Islands Defence Force were being held



and few off in great confusion down Ross  
prisoner at their headquarters, and were  
Road, chased by anguished soldiers ...'



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The Argentines were anxious that the  
modern amenities. The islanders remained  
Falklanders should wish to become part of  
unconvinced. A public meeting at which the  
Argentina, and put into effect a crude 'hearts

Argentines outlined the plan turned into a  
and minds' programme. An Anglo-Argentine  
'fiery affair'. Smith's entries are suffused with  
delegation arrived, proposing that a new  
the contempt he felt for these people. 'They  
town be built for the islanders some distance  
[the Anglo-Argentines] want to have the best  
from Stanley, which would have a sports  
of both sides. Although most frightfully  
complex, swimming pool and many other  
British, they are completely in the grip of the





Portrait of a civilian 81

Delighted Argentines display their flag in Stanley. For a short time they joined the select band of warriors who had defeated the British in battle. Islanders recorded that they felt physical shock when they saw the Argentine flags, and got a savage satisfaction when high winds blew away the largest of them. (Rex Features)

English-language Argentine news programmes, but were quickly seduced by

American and British films.

At first the occupation was irritating rather than oppressive, but as the task force came closer, conditions became worse. Scores of people began leaving Stanley for stations on the 'camp', the islanders term for the country, until by the middle of May the population had been reduced to fewer than 600. Stanley filled with troops (there were eventually more than 3,000 in the town) who were digging bunkers and constructing fortifications with increasing urgency. Smith had at first tried to identify Argentine shipping and aircraft with his binoculars, and had even taken photographs, but he decided that it was now too dangerous. Argentine special police arrived, who began to arrest anyone they deemed to be behaving suspiciously. On one occasion an attempt was made to arrest Smith himself, and it was only his personal appeal to a senior Argentine officer who had been a friend which prevented him being sent to a detention centre. The restrictions imposed by the military government became steadily worse - identification papers, curfews, compulsory blackouts, confiscation of radios, requisitioning of civilian vehicles and spot checks.

On 25 April Smith tuned in to the BBC World Service (most islanders kept clandestine radios) and learned that South Georgia had been retaken. 'The weather Argentines. They don't appear to have any might be lousy but the news is superb' he real loyalty; only a noxious mixture of greed wrote. It was now clear that the British and snobbery, probably more dangerous would come, and that there would probably

than the Argentines themselves.' More  
be a battle for Stanley. Smith and his friends  
successful was the Argentine's introduction  
formed a volunteer fire brigade (they were  
of television to Stanley, with an offer of a  
issued with armbands on which was painted  
colour television set for a deposit of only  
'Bombero-Fireman') and they began hacking  
£20. The islanders were deeply suspicious of  
a bunker out of a stone run in Smith's

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garden. By late April sporadic shooting could  
autumn rains had converted the holes to  
be heard at night, possibly clashes between  
quagmires, and then the boots of thousands  
the garrison and British special forces, but  
of marching Argentines had smeared the  
more likely nervous Argentine conscripts  
mud around the town. Increasing numbers  
firing away at shadows. At 0447 on 1 May  
of islanders spent the nights with friends in  
the war really arrived. Smith recalled 'we  
bunkers, only to discover in the morning  
were literally thrown out of our beds by the  
that Argentine soldiers had broken into their  
most fearful explosions. The house seemed  
homes, smashing furniture, lighting fires  
to lift off its foundations.' There were now  
and leaving the walls smeared with  
11 people living in the house - John Smith,  
excrement. By the end of the month the  
his wife and two sons, and seven neighbours,  
supply of both water and electricity had  
who had banded together for mutual support  
become intermittent, and petrol had  
and protection. All now rushed for the  
virtually disappeared. Islanders now filled up  
bunker and threw themselves through the  
butts from downpipes, read by candlelight

entrance. It was now to be their home for  
and travelled by bicycles. As the British got  
many nights. At dawn Smith left his shelter  
closer Smith noticed more and more  
to make a cup of tea, and witnessed 'a bunch  
Argentines visiting the church.

of Harriers streaking in through the harbour  
*Some come to pray for a few minutes, some*  
entrance almost at sea level at a truly  
*just to sit and shake. One sat in front of us*  
incredible speed. The water and earth boiled  
*shaking and trembling in a combination of*  
with their cannon-fire; then they let go their  
*exhaustion, fear and cold. Another cried*  
bombs on the airfield ... The most fantastic  
*uncontrollably. Most are very young.*  
sight I have ever seen.'

By the end of the first week in June  
Harrier and Vulcan raids and shelling  
Argentine security police were visiting homes  
from warships soon became the backdrop of  
at night, checking that British special forces  
life. By 7 May many shelves in the West  
had not infiltrated into the civilian  
store were becoming noticeably emptier, but  
population. Smith found the knock on the  
there was no sign of panic buying or  
door after dark 'all very sinister, rather like  
hoarding. Smith observed that 'there is an air  
the sort of things you read about in books  
of much greater companionship among  
but never expect to happen to you.' On  
everyone; we all seem to have a lot more  
12 June Smith recorded that the 'intensity of  
trust and a lot more faith in one another  
the shelling is such that the whole town  
-war is a great leveller.' By 15 May Smith  
seems to be shaking'. The bombardment

could report that 'everyone in town is rather  
never let up and 'it's getting a bit trying on  
blase about bombs now; we all turn out to  
the nerves'. The following day was Sunday  
watch.' The feeling didn't last long. A short  
and Smith attended church. On his walk  
time later a naval shell smashed into a  
back through the broken, filthy streets, guns  
house, killing two women outright, and  
roaring in the hills a few miles distant, he  
seriously wounding another, who died later.  
found it 'difficult to grasp that all this was  
On 21 May, the morning of the landings,  
happening in our once serene and tranquil  
Smith reflected upon 'how odd it seemed to  
Stanley. It was like having a nightmare -hear San Carlos mentioned on the world  
sitting on the outside of a situation looking  
news'. By the end of the month Stanley was  
in, paralysed, unable to do anything  
beginning to look like a town that had been  
whatsoever to stop this awful holocaust  
through a war. Heavy Argentine vehicles  
which hourly is increasing in its violence, so  
had cracked the road surfaces, and a series of  
that soon it must explode in a great fury all  
hard frosts had then finished the job. The  
around us.'



How the war ended

The mind of Menendez

In the evening of 14 June three battalions  
cliffs, making any assault from this direction  
moved to resume the attack. The main effort  
difficult. The approach from the south-west  
this time was to be by 5 Infantry Brigade,  
was much easier. Tumbledown-Mt William  
with 2nd Scots Guards assaulting  
were the keys to the defence of Stanley from  
Tumbledown and 1/7th Gurkhas following  
any attack from the west or south-west.  
through to Mt William, which was a spur  
Consequently it was here that Joffre had dug  
stretching south-east of Tumbledown.  
in his best unit, the 5th Marines, who could  
Meanwhile 2 Para, which had acted as  
3 Commando Brigade's reserve on  
When they entered Stanley the Marines and Paras were

10/11 June, was to attack Wireless Ridge.

shocked by the condition of the town. Very little damage was

the result of the British bombardment Argentine vehicles

Tumbledown Mountain was a rocky ridge

had torn up the roads, turning them into quagmires, and in

beginning three miles west of Stanley and

the last stages of the occupation undisciplined Argentine

extending one and a half miles due west. The

soldiers had comprehensively trashed many houses.

northern edge of the ridge ended in steep

(Department of War Studies, Sandhurst)



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An Argentine 105mm gun knocked out by British to keep their casualties relatively low by positioning counter-battery fire. Though they had more artillery most of their ordnance in the streets of Stanley, and much more ammunition. Argentine gunners invariably (Department of War Studies, Sandhurst) came off second best in artillery duels. They managed



call on very considerable artillery assets

13 Platoon lined up at least 10 66mm

positioned only some five miles away. In

anti-tank rocket launchers, loosed a volley,

addition, the western and south-western

and with Kiszley in the lead 14 and

approaches had been heavily mined.

15 Platoons attacked. Tumbledown was a

The Scots Guards commander, Lieutenant

series of false crests - as they reached one

Colonel Mike Scott, sent a platoon of guards

another appeared. In this manner they

and four light tanks in a diversionary attack

covered another 800 yards. Positions were

along the Fitzroy-Stanley track. It had the

overrun, prisoners were taken, and Kiszley

desired effect. One tank was destroyed by a

had to detach more and more men to escort

mine and the platoon attracted heavy

them to the rear. When he finally reached

machine gun, mortar and artillery fire; it

his objective, a rocky ledge which was the

suffered two dead and nine wounded. The

highest part of the ridge, Kiszley had just six

5th Marines had only one man killed and for

men with him. Having spent the last two

a time believed they had stopped the main

weeks in a wilderness of stone runs and peat

British assault.

bogs, the men looked down into Stanley, the

Meanwhile G Company Scots Guards

street lights demarcating the pattern of the

made a silent approach to the western end of

town. They stood stock still and stared. At

the ridge and without being detected

that moment a burst of machine gun fire

occupied almost one-third of Tumbledown.

wounded three of the men. Before 5th

Major John Kiszley's Left Flank Company

Marines had realised the weakness of the

then took over and for 30 minutes continued

British position, Major Simon Price's Right

the advance unopposed. Now about halfway

Flank Company moved up to take over the

along the ridge, they ran into the main

attack. His technique was basically the same

Argentine position. Fire was intense and Left

as Kiszley's - a platoon left flanking to

Flank Company went to ground, unable to

provide fire support, while his other two

move. Kiszley attempted to call down

platoons pushed on destroying sangers with

artillery, but in the dark and confusion could

rocket launchers and grenades. More than

not find his Forward Observation Officer.

11 hours after crossing the start line the

Back at battalion HQ the artillery liaison

Scots Guards had pushed the 5th Marines off

officer tried to direct a bombardment but he

Tumbledown. The Guards had lost seven

was too far back to do this effectively and

killed and 40 wounded, the 5th Marines

one of the guns was firing rogue, as much a

some 30 killed and 14, mainly wounded,

danger to the Scots Guards as it was to the

captured.

5th Marines. The stalemate went on for three

While the Scots Guards' battle raged, ..

hours. Lying on the mountainside next to

2 Para, now commanded by Lieutenant

his signaller Kiszley felt the intense cold give

Colonel David Chaundler, was moving on

way to numbness and realised that

Wireless Ridge, which extended east-west

hypothermia was approaching. Overcoming

about a mile to the north of Tumbledown.

their inhibitions, Kiszley and his signaller

The Argentines here were the 7th Regiment, snuggled together, to warm each other up. As some of whom were survivors of the battle an Argentine shell landed nearby, Kiszley for Mt Longdon. In all, about 500 were dug recalled that his signaller, an irrepressible in. The British plan involved a subsidiary Cockney, expressed some misgivings. 'Ere sir' attack by D and G Squadrons SAS in Royal he said, 'Wot are people gonna fink if we get Marine rigid raiders across Hearndon Water, killed and they find our bodies like this!' an inlet to the north of Stanley Harbour. Realising that more and more of his men illuminated by a searchlight on an Argentine would succumb to the cold, Kiszley sent his hospital ship, the SAS came under intense 13 Platoon to collect up as many rocket fire both from the eastern slopes of Wireless launchers and machine guns as they could Ridge and from massed anti-aircraft batteries find, and work their way along the left flank. north of Stanley acting in the direct fire role.

### Essential Histories • The Falklands War 1982

In these circumstances it was surprising that To the British it suddenly became clear the SAS were able to withdraw with only that the Argentine front had collapsed; they three wounded. Like the Scots Guards' kept up the pressure. While 2 Para followed diversion, this attack convinced some the fleeing mass down off Wireless Ridge, Argentines that they had beaten off a long the Gurkhas advanced up Mt William and anticipated direct assault on Stanley. were disappointed to find that, here too, the

The main attack on Wireless Ridge was Argentines had withdrawn. In a daring supported by the heaviest concentration of

move, 45 Commando were lifted by  
firepower the British had massed thus far.  
helicopter on to Sapper Hill, the last  
During the course of the battle British field  
position before Stanley on which defence  
artillery pumped 6,000 105mm shells onto  
was possible, and occupied it without  
Wireless Ridge, while two frigates lobbed  
resistance. Four Scout helicopters swept over  
about 600 4.5in shell on to the eastern slopes.  
Moody Brook - the first time helicopters had  
The paratroopers advanced with the support  
been used directly over the battlefield since  
of two Scorpions and two Scimitars, which  
the day of the landings - and attacked  
kept up a constant stream of 76 and 30mm  
Argentine batteries with SS-11 missiles.  
cannon fire and 7.62mm machine gun fire,  
Meanwhile an SAS team, infiltrated on to  
Seal Point near Stanley Harbour, directed  
until all four tanks had to withdraw to  
artillery fire on to the retreating Argentines  
restock. All the mortars of 3 Para were  
and on to likely forming-up places. To this  
attached to those of 2 Para and kept up a near  
intense physical pressure, the British now  
continuous arc of bombs, while a machine  
added psychological pressure. Nine days  
gun platoon firing in support expended more  
earlier Captain Rod Bell, a Spanish-speaking  
than 40,000 rounds and came close to  
officer, had begun radio transmissions and  
burning out three General Purpose Machine  
had established direct contact with  
Guns. As one paratrooper commented, it was  
Argentine officers in Stanley. From 0900  
like 'a Warminster firepower demonstration'.  
Bell was on the radio link offering the

Under the weight of this fire Argentine  
Argentines a ceasefire on humanitarian  
morale cracked; 2 Para met little resistance  
grounds and negotiations to discuss  
until D Company reached the highest part of  
honourable terms.  
the ridge. Even here the battle was soon over.  
The paratroopers lost 14 men, three of whom  
Menendez had at first toyed with the idea  
were killed. Nearly 100 Argentine dead were  
of pulling out of Stanley and holding the  
found in positions on the ridge and another  
airfield. He still had three battalions that  
37, mainly wounded, were taken prisoner. The  
had not been in combat and ample food  
remainder of the Argentines were now fleeing  
and munitions for a very long siege. Indeed,  
in broad daylight down the track to Stanley.  
although he did not know it, he still had  
Menendez and Joffre had been heartened  
more artillery than the British, and his  
during the night by reports that a British  
logistic situation was very much better than  
amphibious landing and an armoured attack  
that of his enemy. At about 1100 he  
along the Fitzroy-Stanley track had been  
managed to get a radio link to Galtieri to  
repulsed. But around dawn the true  
discuss the situation. Galtieri reasoned that  
situation was very clear. The remnants of  
British logistics must be close to breaking  
7th Regiment were fleeing back from  
and that Menendez should counter-attack  
Wireless Ridge while the last marines had  
with all the forces at his disposal. In order to  
withdrawn from Tumbledown. Argentine  
spur Menendez the president reminded him  
of the Argentine military code which  
artillery responded vigorously and Joffre

stipulated that a commander should fight  
sent 3rd Regiment west of Stanley to  
until he had lost 50 per cent of his men and  
counter-attack Wireless Ridge. It was a half-expend 75 per cent of his ammunition,  
hearted attack and soon 3rd Regiment was  
and then added, 'the responsibility today is  
hurrying back to Stanley.



How the war ended 87  
with you.' It was at this point that  
last legs. The admiral had confided to his  
Menendez's morale finally broke. According  
diary, 'We are now on the cliff edge of our  
to the transcript of the conversation, he  
capability ... Frankly, if the Argies could only  
replied, 'I cannot ask more of my troops,  
breathe on us, we would fall over! Perhaps  
after what they have been through ... We  
they're the same way: can only trust so,  
have not been able to hold on to the

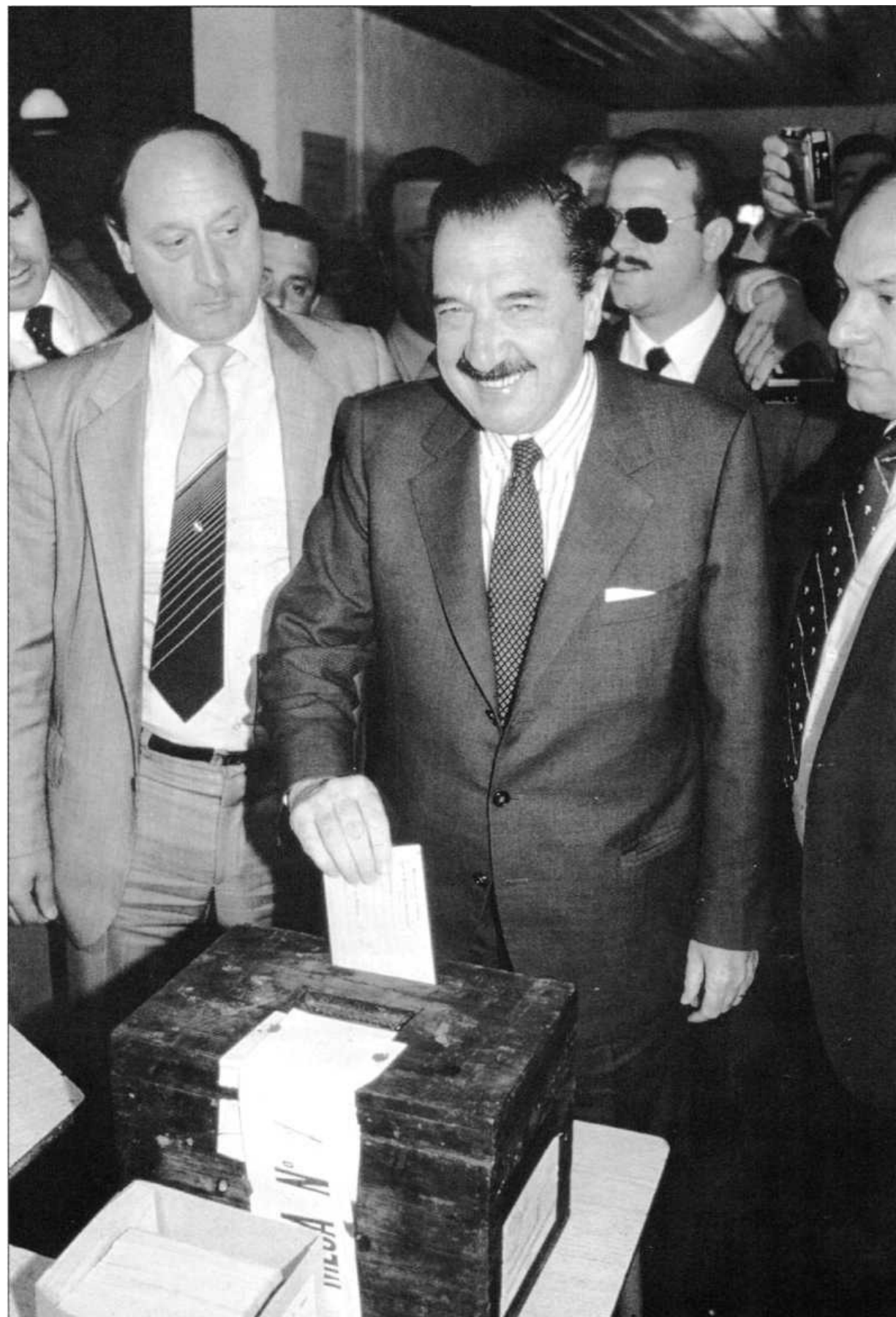
otherwise we're in for a carve up.' On 14 June heights ... We have no room, we have no 1982 the British were digging deep into their means, we have no support ...' Believing resources but were determined to finish it; the himself deserted by his government and Argentines possessed the logistic apparatus to psychologically isolated, Menendez turned carry on fighting for several more weeks, but almost gratefully to the Spanish-speaking their desire to win had evaporated. British officer on another radio link and Interviewed by the BBC on the following agreed to meet Moore's emissaries that day Moore reflected upon the fact that he at afternoon. After preliminary negotiations last understood the stress Clausewitz had the surrender was signed at 2115. placed on the 'moral' factors in war. His men It was a very much closer run thing than had literally killed the Argentine will to fight. Menendez realised. British guns were quite literally down to their last few rounds, and Royal Marines raise the Union Jack outside Government House. The Falklands War was unusual for the late many soldiers had received no rations for twentieth century, in that it had a definite beginning and 72 hours. Only the day before Woodward had a definite end, indicated by the removal of the union flag warned Moore that his task force was on its on 2 April and its restoration on 15 June. (Rex Features) Conclusion and consequences. Thatcher's triumph: It was a famous victory War had come because Argentina had and many Argentine infantry battalions, well misinterpreted the position and hence the supplied with weapons and ammunition in

actions of the British government in the first excellent defensive positions, fought with three months of 1982. Argentina simply courage and determination. By the standards could not believe that the British would of many other conscript armies the respond to Operation Rosario by dispatching Argentines were very good; it was just that a powerful task force, but nor could most the British were very much better, not in international observers. There was a failure at weaponry or logistics, but in terms of two levels; the Junta did not understand the training, confidence and professional pride. dynamics of British party politics and it did The British inflicted nearly 14,000 casualties not appreciate the strength of a tradition on the Argentines, of whom some which, when similar situations had arisen in 2,000 were killed or wounded. But it was not the past, had impelled Britain to go to war. a cheap victory. More than 1,000 British The Junta always seemed to be surprised by became casualties, approximately 4 per cent Britain's responses, having failed to of the task force, of whom 255 were killed. understand that Operation Rosario had The consequences for both belligerents imposed on the Thatcher government a were dramatic and long lasting. When the choice between victory or political death. news that Menendez had surrendered broke For the British the Falklands campaign in Argentina on 15 June huge crowds was an extremely desperate operation, far gathered in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos more desperate than was generally Aires, screaming 'Cowards' and 'Sons of understood at the time. Woodward, Moore,



Bitches' at the soldiers who tried to disperse Thompson, Clapp and the other them. The authority of the army had commanders knew they had to win but they evaporated overnight. No longer afraid, a were not at all sure how they would win. mob attempted to storm the presidential The task force was to operate on an insecure palace. On 17 June Galtieri was ousted as 8,000-mile supply line, the ships could only president after 12 out of 14 senior generals maintain station for about six weeks, the voted at a meeting in Buenos Aires to use strike aircraft of the Argentine Air Force only diplomacy to regain the Malvinas. outnumbered British fighters by about four Thereafter the structure of military rule to one, and the South Atlantic winter was unravelled rapidly; on 30 October 1983 the fast approaching. Fortunately the Argentines Radical Party led by Raoul Alfonsín gained made a number of mistakes. They completely an absolute majority in democratic elections. failed to understand the precarious nature of On 22 April 1985 Galtieri and nine British logistics and insisted on attacking the colleagues were placed on trial for crimes warships. Had they sunk *Atlantic Causeway* committed during the dictatorship, and and *Elk* as well as *Atlantic Conveyor* it is sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. difficult to see how the British could have finished the campaign before Woodward's As the ships of the task force returned to task force fell to pieces. Similarly, had more Britain during the summer of 1982, the Argentine bombs detonated, British losses servicemen were astonished by the reception may have become unsustainable. Argentine

they received. Huge crowds gathered at  
pilots were amongst the best in the world,  
Portsmouth to cheer the ships in, hundreds  
of thousands cheered a victory parade in



## Conclusion and consequences

The people of Argentina were also direct beneficiaries of the British victory. Within months

the military regime had been swept away and democracy had been reintroduced. (Gamma)



## 90 Essential Histories • The Falklands War 1982

Troops returning on *Canberra* were astounded by the

had torn through more than 40 British cities,

size of the crowds that were waiting for them, and the

and in early 1982 a recession began to bite

enthusiasm they displayed. The men of the task force had

hard with industries collapsing and

been completely unaware that the entire world had

unemployment passing the three million

been following the campaign hour by hour and that to

British people they were now heroes. (Gamma)



mark for the first time since the early 1930s.

The stunning victory in the Falklands gave London, and for months afterwards veterans many in Britain a renewed sense of pride in of the South Atlantic Campaign found that their country and a feeling that the decline they did not have to buy a drink in a pub. might not be terminal - that perhaps the The public rejoicing reflected more than bottom had been reached and that Britain exultant jingoism. Since 1945 a sense of would now begin to fight her way back to inexorable decline had been growing in her former standing.

Britain, and since the mid-1970s it had been That was certainly the message accelerating. In the summer of 1981 the propounded by Mrs Thatcher, the greatest worst riots in more than a century and a half beneficiary of the Falklands War. She had



## Conclusion and consequences 91

For the first time since June 1946 British troops marched  
ushered in another 15 years of Conservative  
through London to celebrate a victory. When the task  
rule, an enormous success which in the end  
force had sailed national morale was at an all time low.

seriously damaged the party's cohesion.

The armed forces had at last given British people

The British armed forces also benefited.

something of which they could be proud. (Rex Features)

The Nott Defence Review was quietly

shelved, Nott himself became a political

risked everything on an outright British

casualty, and the Royal Navy got and kept

victory, and now reaped the rewards. The

three carriers. But the impact was not merely

Conservatives carefully avoided mentioning

in terms of equipment. The relationship

the Falklands in the 1983 general election,

between Britain's armed forces and the

but the imagery they employed in the

British public had always been problematic -campaign, dark blue aircraft carrier shapes

the people were warlike but unmilitary.

on light blue backgrounds, stirred memories

Despite the success of the SAS in occasional

that were still fresh. In a move of

highly publicised operations, the general

astonishing ineptitude some Labour MPs

view of the British armed forces held by the

attacked various aspects of the Prime

British public before the spring of 1982 was

Minister's handling of the war, and suffered

that they were brave but incompetent. The

the consequences - a massively increased

disaster of Suez, and the disasters in the first

Conservative majority. Now firmly

three years of the Second World War and for

established in the premiership, Mrs Thatcher

much of the First World War, had informed

disposed of likely rivals, starting with Francis  
the memories of three generations. Now new  
Pym, and then steadily working her way  
armed forces seemed to have emerged,  
through the so-called 'wets'. The Falklands  
efficient, cunning, intelligent, competent  
92 Essential Histories • The Falklands War 1982

and courageous. Public approval of the  
Schwarzkopf, issued an open apology to the  
armed forces rose rapidly, and remained high  
units involved. He was to oversee the rebirth  
for the rest of the century, as the middle and  
of American military prowess, but not for  
junior commanders of the campaign began  
another seven years.  
to achieve high rank.

But the people on whom the war had the  
Perhaps the greatest compliments paid to  
greatest impact were the Falkland islanders.  
the British armed forces came from Britain's  
Their way of life, not unlike that of  
greatest adversary and her closest ally.  
nineteenth-century Highland crofters, was  
Nowhere did the news of Darwin-Goose  
gone forever. In the summer of 1982 there  
Green have a greater impact than in the  
were about 25,000 people on the islands, ten  
Soviet Union. Soviet analysts studied the  
times the number who had ever lived on the  
battle intensively, and decided on this basis  
Falklands before. At the end of the fighting  
that they had considerably underestimated  
Britain had to maintain a substantial  
the fighting power of the British Army of the  
garrison, which entailed regular flights from  
Rhine. Beginning in the autumn of 1982  
Brize Norton, and a much more regular  
Warsaw Pact forces facing the British in

shipping service. Expanded radio services  
northern Germany began to receive  
and television soon followed, along with  
substantial reinforcements. Equally impressed,  
massively increased visits by tourists,  
the United States began moderating its  
surveying the battlefields, watching the wild  
post-Vietnam objections to military  
life, walking across the moors, and fishing.  
interventions, and in 1983 sent Marines to  
Tracks were soon metalled, and family cars  
the Lebanon and launched an invasion of  
were seen alongside the ubiquitous land  
Grenada, lest Cuba and the USSR build bases  
rover. The greatest change was the beginning  
on the tiny island state. Both operations went  
of systematic large scale exploration for oil,  
wrong. In Beirut the Marines suffered  
with rumours of fields which would make  
241 dead in a terrorist attack, while in  
those of the North Sea look like puddles.  
Grenada landings of special forces and  
Should this come to pass the natives of the  
paratroopers degenerated into an  
Falklands will become the richest people on  
embarrassing shambles, so much so that the  
Earth, capable perhaps of buying the Royal  
ground force commander, General Norman  
Navy - or Argentina.

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The Argentine invasion of the Falklands in 1982 sparked national outrage and Britain felt she had to avenge the humiliation and protect her own. This volume explores both the military and political dimensions of an important conflict, including



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*Front and back cover image: The 'yomp' begins. (MOD, print from MARS)*

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